

## The Slovene Re-Actualization of Hegel's Philosophy

To begin with a joke, the world history may have ended in 1806 at the battle of Jena where Napoleon defeated the Prussian Army, but, ironically, it was re-opened with a new reading of Hegel in one of the most provincial places on Earth in one of the most hollow periods of its history, in Ljubljana in the late 1970s. Hegel, the famous testamentary executor of history, thus became a godfather to its new beginning. Or, to put it more modestly, the theoretical aspiration of the Ljubljana School of Psychoanalysis is to make use of Hegel's philosophy in order to rigorously re-examine not only the Hegelian concepts of teleology, absolute knowledge, providence, cunning of reason, or absolute religion, but also of all the concepts of Nietzsche's, Heidegger's, or of the proponents of linguistic turn and postmodernism, the concepts of eternal recurrence, *Geschick*, the open processes of language games and deconstructions, to name just a few. It could be said that the only way to restart history, which had ended according to Hegel, was to end the post-Hegelian end of grand narratives.

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The almost Socratic, elenctic method of the Ljubljana School consists in the endeavour to detect the fallacy of every position which makes it too easy for itself, be it the great metaphysical closures of the past or the post-metaphysical ironic and paralogical self-indulgences of recent times. Perhaps, this stance could be best expressed by a number of paradoxes. The fact that history never ended does not make its openness any less simplistic and platitudinous. The fact that God died is not an argument in favour of paganism. The fact that truth is not like a stamped coin is not the reason to consider "truth" to be an obsolete notion. The fact that there is no afterlife does not elevate death into the absolute horizon of our existence. In other words, against the "bad infinities" of pragmatics and postmodernism, the Slovene Hegelians advocate definite, historically determinate actions and incisions, and against the existentialist and hermeneutic pathos of finitude, they plead the infinite and universal dimension of ethics and truth.

Ljubljana School of Psychoanalysis is undoubtedly the most prominent event in the history of Slovene philosophy: it put our small country on the map of world philosophy. The crucial invention of two of its co-founders, Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, was to combine such seemingly disparate scientific traditions as Hegel's and Marx's philosophy, structuralism, and Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Against the abstract moral rigorism

of Kant's ethics, Hegel is to this day routinely regarded and exploited as a philosopher of some sort of conciliatory particularity, of down-to-earth morality of family life, civic duties, social normality, and even of servility to the state. In contrast, the Ljubljana reading insists emphatically on the speculative, idealist, reflexive, systemic, and dialectical edge of his philosophy because it believes that only a return to the most unworldly core of the Hegelian logic can provide impulses for the opening of new perspectives on the concreteness of our historical, social, and political situation. Instead of discerning from Hegel's work the elements of recognition, reconciliation, education, progress, the "Ljubljana Hegel" rather stresses the most extravagant episodes of his thought: master-slave dialectic, infinite judgments, beautiful soul and the forgiveness of evil, the reflection of essence and shine, the death of Christ on the cross, the monarch, etc. And the five contributions to this edition of *Filozofija i društvo* make the best example of the specifically Slovene attempt to institute a new Hegelian absolutism.

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## In Defense of Hegel's Madness

**Abstract** *The article is a confrontation with Robert Brandom's reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, his attempt to systematically "renormalize" Hegel, i.e., to reduce his extravagant formulations to the criteria of common sense. The article analyses a number of Brandom's "domestications" of Hegel's speculative concepts: self-relating, determinate negation, mediation, In-itself, action, knowledge, Spirit, reconciliation, history. On the basis of the examples from Marx, Freud, structuralism, Lévi-Strauss, Althusser, Lacan, Adorno, the text defends Hegel's "madness", the irreducible speculative, non-interpretable core of his philosophy. Hegel's statements have to shock us, and this excess cannot be explained away through interpretation since the truth they deliver hinges on that.*

**Keywords:** *Hegel, Brandom, In-itself, action, history*

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Hegel is a notoriously "difficult" writer: many of his statements run against our common sense and cannot but appear as crazy speculations. In his detailed reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Brandom, internet) Robert Brandom attempts to systematically "renormalize" Hegel, i.e., to demonstrate how Hegel's most extravagant formulations, when properly (re)interpreted, make sense in our common space of meaning. I highly appreciate Brandom's attempt – it is a model of clear argumentative reasoning which consistently pursues the basic insight on which it relies. However, I want to argue against such "domestication" of Hegel and defend Hegel's "madness": Hegel's statements *have* to shock us, and this excess cannot be explained away through interpretation since the truth they deliver hinges on that.

### The Immediacy of Mediation

What Brandom leaves behind in his "renormalization" of Hegel is primarily the dimension of self-relating. Let's take two basic Hegelian concepts: determinate negation and mediation (*Vermittlung*). Brandom interprets them as the series of exclusions and inclusions that constitute the identity of every object. "Determinate negation" means that if the chair I am sitting on is made of plastic then it is not made of metal or wood; if it is

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white then it is not brown or grey or any other color; etc. "Mediation" encapsulates the intricate relation to other objects and processes which made this chair what it is: the plastic it is made of presupposes industrial production based on scientific knowledge as well as the culture in which it was made; etc. There is nothing specifically "dialectical" in this, just a common sense realist universe:

Properties stand to one another in relations of modally robust *exclusion*. An object's possessing one property *precludes* it from exhibiting some others, in the sense that it is *impossible* to exhibit the incompatible properties simultaneously. Nothing can be at once both a bivalve and a vertebrate. This exclusion structure induces a corresponding *inclusion* structure: if Coda *were* a dog, then Coda *would be* a mammal, for everything incompatible with being a mammal is incompatible with being a dog. It is these counterfactual-supporting exclusions and inclusions that are codified in laws of nature. (Brandom, internet)

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The dialectics of inclusion and exclusion is here reduced to the interplay of included and excluded properties of a thing: this One-thing is grey, wooden, man-made, with three legs, etc., so it is not red, metallic, four-legged, etc.. What is missing is exclusion brought to self-reference: the One (an entity) excludes also its own properties in the sense that it "is" none of them but achieves its self-identity by way of what Hegel calls negative self-relationship. This is also why Brandom (like Pippin apropos positing and external reflection) remains caught in the infinite game of mediation and immediacy, thereby missing the key passage from determinate negation to negative determination (what structural linguistics calls differentiability): it is not only that what a thing is, its properties, is determined by what it is not, by the properties it excluded, it is also that the very absence of property can count as a property. With regard to the couple of mediation and immediacy, this means that it is not enough to assert the mediated nature of every immediacy – we have to add the immediacy of mediation itself, as Hegel does it, for example, apropos the pure Self: "The 'I,' or becoming in general, this mediation, on account of its simple nature, is just immediacy in the process of becoming, and is the immediate itself." (Hegel 1977: 11, § 21) Brandom deploys the mutual dependence of mediation and immediacy (difference and identity): every identity is mediated, it is sustained by a network of differences from what this object is not, from all other objects; but since he ignores the immediacy of mediation itself, he concludes that mediation cannot count as the ultimate foundation for the simple reason that each of these other objects also possesses its own specific determinate identity, and if

their determinate identities (what distinguishes them one from another) are taken likewise to consist in their relations to others similarly conceived, then the whole scheme is threatened by incoherence. The strategy amounts to seeing each individual as 'borrowing' its moment of diversity from (depending for the intelligibility of its determinate difference from others upon) that of other, different, individuals, which stand in diverse determinate relations to the first. (Brandom, internet)

In short, the totality of interrelated phenomena cannot be grounded exclusively in differentiability since, in this case, it "hangs in the air": if every thing, including all others, is grounded differentially, then there is ultimately no identity from which things are differentiated... This, incidentally, is an old reproach to Hegel formulated already by Schelling (who dismissed Hegel's thought as a "negative philosophy" in need of an immediate positive Ground) and recently reformulated by Dieter Henrich. Lacan's answer to this reproach is that the symbolic order precisely is such a differential structure which "hangs in the air", and, furthermore, than this "hanging in the air", this lack of roots in any substantial positive reality, is what subjectivizes the symbolic structure.

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In order to elaborate the idea of a subjectivized structure, we need to radicalize the notion of differentiability, bringing it to self-referentiality. Ferdinand de Saussure was the first to formulate the notion of differentiability, pointing out that the identity of a signifier resides only in a series of differences (the features which distinguish it from other signifiers) – there is no positivity in a signifier, it "is" only a series of what it is *not*. The crucial consequence of differential identity is that the very absence of a feature can itself count as a feature, as a positive fact – if every presence arises only against the background of potential absence, then we can also talk about the presence of absence as such. For example, something not happening can also be a positive event – recall the famous dialogue from "Silver Blaze" between Scotland Yard detective Gregory and Sherlock Holmes about the "curious incident of the dog in the night-time":

"Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"

"To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."

"The dog did nothing in the night-time."

"That was the curious incident." (Doyle 1981: 347)

This positive existence of the absence itself, the fact that the absence of a feature is itself a positive feature which defines the thing in question, is what characterizes a differential order, and, in this precise sense, differentiability is the core feature of dialectics proper. Consequently,

Jameson was right to emphasize, against the standard Hegelian-Marxist rejection of structuralism as “undialectical”, that the role of the structuralist explosion in the 1960s was “to signal a reawakening or a rediscovery of the dialectic”. (Jameson 2010: 48) This is also why, in a nice jab at cultural studies’ fashionable rejection of “binary logic”, Jameson calls for “a generalized celebration of the binary opposition”, (Jameson 2010: 48) which, brought to self-referentiality, is the very matrix of structural relationality or differentiality. Furthermore, insofar as Hegel is *the* dialectician and his *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the unsurpassed model of dialectical analysis, Jameson is fully justified in drawing his non-intuitive conclusion: “it is certain that the *Phenomenology* is a profoundly structuralist work *avant la lettre*.” (Jameson 2010: 48) (The link between this differentialist approach and Hegelian dialectics was clearly perceived by Roman Jakobson.)

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But if absence itself can function as presence or as a positive fact – if, for example, women’s lack of a penis is in itself a “curious incident” – then presence (man’s possession of a penis) can also arise only against the background of its (possible) absence. But how, precisely? Here we need to introduce self-reflexivity into the signifying order: if the identity of a signifier is nothing but the series of its constitutive differences, then every signifying series has to be supplemented – “sutured” – by a reflexive signifier which has no determinate meaning (signified), since it stands only for the presence of meaning as such (as opposed to its absence). The first to fully articulate the necessity of such a signifier was Lévi-Strauss, in his famous interpretation of “*mana*”; his achievement was to de-mystify *mana*, reducing its irrational connotation of a mythic or magical power to a precise symbolic function. Lévi-Strauss’s starting point is that language as a bearer of meaning by definition arises at once, covering the entire horizon: “Whatever may have been the moment and the circumstances of its appearance in the ascent of animal life, language can only have arisen all at once. Things cannot have begun to signify gradually.” (Lévi-Strauss 1987: 59) This sudden emergence, however, introduces an imbalance between the two orders of the signifier and the signified: since the signifying network is finite, it cannot adequately cover the endless field of the signified in its entirety. In this way,

a fundamental situation perseveres which arises out of the human condition: namely, that man has from the start had at his disposition a signifier-totality which he is at a loss to know how to allocate to a signified, given as such, but no less unknown for being given. There is always a non-equivalence or “inadequation” between the two, a

non-fit and overspill which divine understanding alone can soak up; this generates a signifier-surfeit relative to the signifieds to which it can be fitted. So, in man's effort to understand the world, he always disposes of a surplus of signification ... That distribution of a supplementary ration [...] is absolutely necessary to insure that, in total, the available signifier and the mapped-out signified may remain in the relationship of complementarity which is the very condition of the exercise of symbolic thinking. (Lévi-Strauss 1987: 62–3)

Every signifying field thus has to be “sutured” by a supplementary zero-signifier, “a *zero symbolic value*, that is, a sign marking the necessity of a supplementary symbolic content over and above that which the signified already contains”. (Lévi-Strauss 1987: 64) This signifier is “a symbol in its pure state”: lacking any determinate meaning, it stands for the presence of meaning *as such* in contrast to its absence; in a further dialectical twist, the mode of appearance of this supplementary signifier which stands for meaning as such is non-sense (Deleuze developed this point in his *Logic of Sense*). Notions like *mana* thus “represent nothing more or less than that *floating signifier* which is the disability of all finite thought”. (Lévi-Strauss 1987: 63)

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The first thing to note here is Lévi-Strauss's commitment to scientific positivism: he grounds the necessity of “mana” in the gap between the constraints of our language and infinite reality. Like the early Badiou and Althusser, he excludes science from the dialectics of lack that generates the need for a suturing element. For Lévi-Strauss, “mana” stands for the “poetic” excess which compensates for the constraints of our finite predicament, while the effort of science is precisely to suspend “mana” and provide direct adequate knowledge. Following Althusser, one can claim that “mana” is an elementary operator of ideology which reverses the lack of our knowledge into the imaginary experience of the ineffable surplus of Meaning. The next step towards “suture” proper consists of three interconnected gestures: the *universalization* of “mana” (the zero-signifier is not just a mark of ideology, but a feature of every signifying structure); its *subjectivization* (re-defining “mana” as the point of the inscription of the subject into the signifying chain); and its *temporalization* (a temporality which is not empirical but logical, inscribed into the very signifying structure). In other words, this zero-signifier is the immediacy of mediation at its purest: a signifier whose identity consists only in its difference, i.e., which gives body to difference as such. This is why it represents the subject for other signifiers: subject is, at its most elementary, difference as such.

## The Stick in itself, for us, for itself

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Brandom begins his reading of *Phenomenology* with an interpretation of the notion of experience (*Erfahrung*) in the short "Preface"; it is here that he performs his first great act of "renormalization", trying to translate into common sense Hegel's paradoxical claim that when, in an experience, we compare our notion of a thing to this thing itself (which serves as the standard by means of which we measure the adequacy of our notion) and establish that our notion does not fit the thing, we not only have to change our notion of the thing (the way this thing is "for us") – what has to change is also the very standard by means of which we measured the adequacy of our notion, the thing itself. Brandom evokes here the simple example of a straight stick which, half-drowned into water, appears to us as bent: when we pull the stick out of water, we immediately see that the stick is really (in itself) straight – so in what sense does here the experience change also the thing itself? Wasn't the stick all the time the same (straight), we just changed our (erroneous) notion of it? Brandom agrees that "the 'new, true object' which 'emerges to consciousness' is *not* the straight stick. (After all, *it* didn't change; it was straight all along.)" (Brandom, internet) What changed was our notion (representation) of the stick-in-itself: we thought that the stick-in-itself is also bent (like our perception of it), but now we realize that the bent stick was only our wrong representation. This is the sense in which

in the alteration of the knowledge the object itself becomes to consciousness something which has in fact been altered as well. What alters is the status of the bent-stick representing, what it is to consciousness. It had enjoyed the status of being to consciousness what the stick is in itself. But now its status has changed to being *to* consciousness only what the stick was *for* consciousness: an appearance. [...] The 'new, true object' is the bent-stick representation revealed as erroneous, as a *misrepresentation* of what is now *to* the subject the way things really are: a straight stick. This representing is 'true' not in the sense of representing how things really are, but in the sense that what is now to consciousness is what *it* really is: a mere appearance, a misrepresenting. That is why 'This new object contains the annihilation of the first; it is the experience constituted through that first object.' (Brandom, internet)

Brandom resolves the paradox so that he introduces three levels of the object (stick, in this case): the way the stick is for us, our notion/perception of the stick (it appears bent); the way the stick-in-itself appears to us (i.e., the way we presume the stick is in itself), and the way the stick really is in itself, independently of us (straight). So what changes in our



experience is not the stick-in-itself but just the second level, the way we perceived its In-itself: what we presumed to be the stick-in-itself now changes into a false appearance:

the object that was taken to be in itself reveals itself, via incompatibilities, as in fact [...] only what it was for consciousness. That moment of independence of the object, Hegel argues, is essential for the possession by our concepts of determinate content. Incompatibility is significant only for and in this process. (Brandom, internet)

This solution only works if we posit a strict difference between the order of ideas (that compose our knowledge) and the order of things (the way they are in themselves): in the process of knowledge, our ideas change, they gradually approach the way things are in themselves, while things in themselves remain the way they are, unaffected by the process of knowledge. This "asymmetry between the order and connection of ideas and that of things" is formulated by Brandom in the terms of the difference between material incompatibility and deontic incompatibility: the same object (stick) cannot be at the same time straight and bent, the two properties are incompatible; but we can in our mind entertain two incompatible ideas about an object, this is just deontically inappropriate: "It is *impossible* for one object simultaneously to exhibit materially incompatible properties (or for two incompatible states of affairs to obtain), while it is only *inappropriate* for one subject simultaneously to endorse materially incompatible commitments." (Brandom, internet) The progress of knowledge is therefore "the process in and through which more and more of how the world really is, what is actually materially incompatible with what in the objective alethic sense, becomes incorporated in material incompatibilities deontically acknowledged by subjects". (Brandom, internet) In short, our knowledge progresses when, upon discovering incompatibilities in our notion of an object, we discard the inappropriate aspects and in this way bring our notion of the object closer to its reality – contradiction can exist only in our knowledge, not in the thing itself, which is why we progress precisely by way of discarding contradictions:

Here "how things objectively are", or are "in themselves" means "always already are anyway", in the sense that how they are *in* themselves swings free of how they are *for* the subject. That sort of independence is presupposed by their functioning as a normative standard for assessment of appearances, a standard which what things are for the subject may or may not satisfy. (Brandom, internet)

Or, to put it in the terms of the classic distinction between reference (that X we are talking about) and sense (what we are saying about it), the

reference is a constant, external standard we are gradually approaching, while sense is constantly changing. Throughout history of humanity, people talk about water, and while the sense of the term gets gradually richer (say, with modern science, we discover the chemical composition of water,  $H_2O$ ), "the reference is constant":

It is what ties the whole process together into a unity, grouping a whole class of senses together as representings of the same represented way the world is, more or less explicit expressions of the same implicit content. The senses that (according to the reconstructed genealogy) elaborate, express, and culminate in that constant, unifying content, by contrast, are various and variable, differing in the extent to which and the ways in which they make that implicit content explicit. They are the moment of disparity of form of expressing of the identical content expressed. Up until the very end (the current, temporary culmination), the senses, the ways things are for consciousness, are never quite right, never fully adequate expressions of their content, still subject to error and failure when they are applied to novel particulars. But the way things are in themselves, reality, persists unchanged and unmoved by the flux of its appearances. (Brandom, internet)

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But does such a reading not run against Hegel's concise definition of speculative thinking: "*Speculative thinking* consists solely in the fact that thinking holds fast contradiction, and in it, its own self." (Hegel 2010: 440) Does Brandom who, like Kant, is not ready to "hold fast" to contradictions in things themselves, thereby not display a "tenderness for the things of this world", as Hegel put it in his famous comment on Kant's antinomies from his "small" (*Encyclopaedia*) *Logic*:

What is made explicit here is that it is the content itself, namely, the categories on their own account, that bring about the contradiction. This thought, that the contradiction which is posited by the determinations of the understanding in what is rational is *essential* and *necessary*, has to be considered one of the most important and profound advances of the philosophy of modern times. But the solution is as trivial as the viewpoint is profound; it consists merely in a tenderness for the things of this world. The stain of contradiction ought not to be in the essence of what is in the world; it has to belong *only* to thinking reason, to the *essence* of the *spirit*. It is not considered at all objectionable that the world *as it appears* shows contradictions to the spirit that observes it; the way the world is for subjective spirit, for *sensibility*, and for the *understanding*, is the world as it appears. But when the *essence* of what is in the world is compared with the *essence* of spirit, it may surprise us to see how naively the humble affirmation has been advanced, and repeated, that what is inwardly contradictory is not the essence of the world, but belongs to reason, the thinking essence. (Hegel 1991a: 92, § 48)

To clarify this key passage, let us return to the unfortunate stick. When we are dealing with a straight stick which, when partially submerged into water, falsely appears as a bent stick, one can effectively conceive the process of knowledge as the process of gradually approaching the reality of the stick, the way it exists in itself, independently of our perception. However, one should introduce here the difference between objects which are what they are independently of our notion of them (like a straight stick) and objects which change when their for-itself (or for-us) changes: "For such a being can change what it is *in* itself by changing what it is *for* itself. Call a creature 'essentially self-conscious' if what it is *for* itself, its self-conception, is an essential element of what it is *in* itself. How something that is essentially self-conscious *appears* to itself is part of what it *really* is." (Brandom, internet) Imagine a stick which remains straight in reality (in itself) only insofar as it appears as a bent stick – therein resides the role of ideology, of ideological illusion: an "alienated" society can reproduce itself (in its actuality) only through its illusory/false self-appearance or self-perception – the moment it appears to itself the way it actually is, this actuality disintegrates. In a homologous way, psychoanalysis deals with entities which exist only insofar as they are not adequately self-conscious or "for themselves": for Freud (at least in the early phase of his work), a symptom disappears after the subject (whose symptom it is) gains access to its meaning, i.e., it persists only insofar as its meaning remains unknown. In a closer analysis, we soon realize that things are more complex: are symptoms also not forms of "objectified" self-consciousness, are they not formations in the guise of which I register the truth about myself that remains inaccessible to my consciousness? One should distinguish here simple self-consciousness (being aware of something) from "self-consciousness" as the act of symbolic registration: I can be aware of the meaning of a symptom of mine without really assuming this meaning – while I know what it means, I block the symbolic efficiency of this knowledge, i.e., this knowledge doesn't really affect my subjective position.

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For Brandom, the In-itself is by definition non-contradictory, and the entire dynamics (movement) is on the cognitive/subjective side: one passes from one failed concept to another more adequate one which will also fail, etc., but this movement is not the movement in the thing itself... Does Brandom not do here the exact opposite of Hegel? When Hegel confronts an epistemological inconsistency or "contradiction" which appears as an obstacle to our access to the object itself (if we have incompatible notions of an object, they cannot be all true), Hegel resolves this dilemma by way of transposing what appears as epistemological obstacle

into an ontological feature, a “contradiction” in the thing itself. Brandom, on the contrary, resolves an ontological inconsistency by way of transposing it into epistemological illusion/inadequacy, so that reality is saved from contradiction.

Recall Adorno's classic analysis of the antagonistic character of the notion of society. In a first approach, the split between the two notions of society (Anglo-Saxon individualistic-nominalist and Durkheimian organicist notion of society as a totality which preexists individuals) seems irreducible, we seem to be dealing with a true Kantian antinomy which cannot be resolved via a higher “dialectical synthesis”, and which elevates society into an inaccessible Thing-in-itself; however, in a second approach, one should merely take note of how this radical antinomy which seems to preclude our access to the Thing **ALREADY IS THE THING ITSELF** – the fundamental feature of today's society **IS** the irreconcilable antagonism between Totality and the individual.

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Instead of rejecting the Hegelian false reconciliation, one should reject as illusory the very notion of dialectical reconciliation, i.e., one should renounce the demand for a “true” reconciliation. Hegel was fully aware that reconciliation does not alleviate real suffering and antagonisms – his formulas of reconciliation from the foreword to his *Philosophy of Right* is that one should “recognize reason as the rose in the cross of the present”, (Hegel 1991b: 22) or, to put it in Marx's terms, in reconciliation, one does not change external reality to fit some Idea, one recognizes this Idea as the inner “truth” of this miserable reality itself. The Marxist reproach that, instead of transforming reality, Hegel only proposes its new interpretation, thus in a way misses the point – it knocks on an open door, since, for Hegel, in order to pass from alienation to reconciliation, one does not have to change reality, but the way we perceive it and relate to it.

How does truth progress? For Hegel, we do not compare our notion of truth (for us) with the truth in-itself and, in this way, gradually approach the truth in-itself. Hegel is a thinker of radical immanence: in the process of experience, we compare a notion with itself, with its own actualization or exemplification. Hegel is here radically anti-Platonist: in the gap that separates a notion from its examples, the truth is on the side of examples, examples bring out immanent inconsistencies of a notion, so when examples do not fit a notion we should transform this notion itself.

One should problematize here Brandom's opposition of non-normative objective reality and the discursive normative universe: the whole point

of Hegel's idealist reversal of the standard notion of truth as *adequatio ad rem* (the correspondence of our thoughts to things) into *adequatio* of a thing to its own concept (what for a/one – *was für ein* – house is this house? Is it really a house? Does it fit the notion of a house?) is that *a certain normative split characterizes reality itself*: real objects never fully fit their notion. Let us take Hegel's classic example, that of the state. No empirical state is a "true state", fully adequate to its notion, and when we realize this, we have to change also this notion itself. For example, the medieval feudal Christian state was not a failure only when we measure it by the standards of modern democratic state respecting human freedoms and rights, it was a failure in its own terms (it systematically failed to realize the ideal of a harmonious hierarchic social body), and the result of this failure was that we had to change this ideal notion itself. So what happens at the end of this process? Do we finally get the true notion of State with the concept of modern constitutional monarchy described by Hegel in his philosophy of right? No: the ultimate result is that the "contradiction" (antagonism) is internal to the notion of State as such, so that a "true" state is no longer a state. To get a community that would meet the basic criteria of a "true state" (harmonious social body), we have to pass from State to Religion, to a religious community – and here antagonisms explode again... What we get at the end of the entire system is not a final rest but the circularity of the movement itself.

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But, one might reply, State is in itself a normative (deontic) entity, so what about simple objects like chairs or tables? Hegel's idealist wager is that even here there is a normative dimension at work in reality itself. That is to say, what is the point of Hegel's dialectical deduction of one form of life or reality to another – for example, how do we pass from plants to animal life in his philosophy of nature? What Hegel proposes is not just a classification of forms of life from lower ones to higher ones: each higher form of life is "deduced" from the lower one as an attempt to resolve its inner inconsistency, so that there definitely is a movement of norm-motivated change in reality itself. If an object doesn't fit its notion, one has to change both, also the notion. There is more in an example of a notion than in a notion of which the example is an example, i.e., the gap between a notion and its example is internal to the notion itself. Here, the opposition between subjective deontic incompatibility and objective incompatibility breaks down: it is not that objective incompatibility means that this cannot happen in reality; reality IS incompatibility embodied. Brandom is right when he locates dynamics into normative contradictions, but he is not ready to follow Hegel's idealism

and locate the normative tension into things themselves. Here is his crucial formulation:

We are to start with phenomena, with how things are *for* consciousness, with how they *seem* or *appear*, with the contents we grasp and express. The idea that there is some way things *really* are, *in* themselves, the concept of what is represented, what we are thinking and talking *about* by grasping and expressing those contents, is to be understood in terms of features of those contents themselves. The representational dimension of concept use is to be explained in terms of what it is to take or treat conceptual contents *as* representings, what it is for them to be representings *for* or *to* us. Reference is to be explained as an aspect of sense. The way in which the very idea of noumena is to be explicated and elaborated from features of the historical trajectory by which phenomena (conceptual contents) develop and are determined is the essence of Hegel's distinctive version of the semantics of sense and reference. (Brandom, internet)

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A certain ambiguity clings to these formulations: is the inconsistency of phenomena, of our approaches/notions, itself the Real, or is the Real, the thing-in-itself, a substantial entity outside the symbolic space, which we approach and (mis)interpret through conflicting notions? For Hegel as well as for Lacan, one touches the Real only in/through the "contradictions" (failures, discrepancies) of our notions of the real, not in the sense that we correct our wrong commitments when we encounter contradiction, but more radically: this "contradiction" is the Real itself. The subject is inscribed into the real, it touches the real, precisely at the point of the utmost "subjective" excess, in what it adds to the object, in the way it distorts the object. Let's take the most traditional case imaginable: class struggle. There is no neutral "impartial" approach to it, no meta-language, every apprehension of class struggle is already "distorted" by the subject's engagement in it, and this distortion, far from preventing our direct approach to the actuality of class struggle, IS in itself the real of the class struggle – it is in this very failure to subtract its own partial perspective and reach the object that the Real inscribes itself, that the subject touches the Real. So it is not just that the subject always fails, etc.: *it is through this failure that the subject reaches the Real*.

So, to introduce some order in this proliferation of appearances, first, we begin with naive reality (things simply are what they appear to be); then, "things are not what they seem", the gap between appearance and reality arises; then, we get it that the essence behind appearance is itself an appearance, the appearance of what lies beyond what we see (brought to extreme, this "appearing of essence" functions as "appearing to appear" – a situation in which a mask masks the fact that there is nothing beneath

it: what we (mis)took for a mask is reality itself). At this point, it may appear that all there is are just appearances and their interplay; however, what cannot be reduced to a mere appearance is the very gap that separates a mere appearance from the appearance of essence. At its most radical, the Real is thus not an In-itself beyond illusory appearances but the very gap that separates different levels of appearances.

### Action and Responsibility

A tension homologous to that of the process of cognition characterizes also the course of human actions. Hegel's first definition of action sounds surprising:

Action alters nothing and opposes nothing. It is the pure form of a transition from a state of not being seen to one of being seen, and the content which is brought out into the daylight and displayed is nothing else but what this action already is in itself. (Hegel 1977: 237, § 396)

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This aspect of Hegel's theory of action is crucial: there is no tension between the acting agent and the object the agent is acting upon, no "forcing" of the object, no struggle with the material, no heroic effort to impose subjective form on the material, no radical Otherness in the material, no impenetrable X that resists the acting agent. The appearance of struggle and resistance of the material should be reinterpreted as the sign of the immanent contradiction of the action itself. Let us take the Stalinist forced collectivization of land in the late 1920s: the desperate stubborn resistance of individual farmers to this action expressed the inner "contradiction" and weakness of the project of collectivization itself; the tragic consequences of the collectivization – millions of dead farmers in the Ukraine hunger, the loss of the majority of livestock, etc. – "brought out into the daylight and displayed what this action already was in itself". Therein resides what Lebrun called Hegel's "immobilism": there is nothing New that emerges in a dialectical process, everything is already here, the transition is purely formal, things don't change but merely become what they always-already were... So is Hegel a traditional metaphysician who reduces change (development, progress) to the circular movement of absolutely-immanent self-deployment? It is here that Hegel's novelty arises: true, things only become what they always-already were, there is no change here, but there is a change at a much more radical level – not the change from what they things were to what they are now, but the change in what they always-already were. The mechanism is here the one of retroactivity: an expression of the past (determined by it) engenders what it expresses, i.e., things become what they already were – what changes in

a dialectical process is the eternal past itself. We are predetermined by fate, but we can change this fate itself.

To put it in another way, Hegel's point is not that "nothing really changes" in a change, that we only establish (make explicit) what things always-already were. His point is a much more precise one: in order for the things to "really change", we must first accept that they have already changed. One has to turn around here the old evolutionist notion of change which first takes place "in the underground", invisible as such, within the frame of the old form, and finally, when this old form can no longer contain the new content, it falls away and the new form imposes itself. (There is an ambiguity here in Marx: he often describes the tension between forces and relations of production in this evolutionary terms, but he also asserts the primacy of formal subsumption of the forces of production under capital over their material subsumption – first, old (artisanal) forces are subsumed under capital, and then, gradually, they are replaced by modern industrial forces.)

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Every action is characterized by the tension between the explicit goal pursued by the agent and its unintended consequences. Brandon interprets Hegel here with reference to Davidson: when I press a bell button which is (unknown to me) connected to a bomb and thereby trigger a catastrophic explosion, "I am responsible for it in the sense that it is 'mine': I did it. But it is *imputed* to me only under the intentional descriptions: the ones appearing in a specification of my purpose, the descriptions that specify the deed as something I had reason to do". (Brandom, internet) So although I am responsible for the explosion (since I triggered it), what can be imputed to me is only the act of pressing the bell button with the intention of ringing the bell...<sup>1</sup> The first thing to do here is to include unconscious motivations: I commit an act with a clear conscious intention, but its unintended consequence realizes my unconsciously-desired goal? It is weird that, in his long and detailed analyses of responsibility without conscious intention, and while he repeatedly talks about Oedipus, Brandom never mentions Freud and psychoanalysis, although, for Freud, Oedipus's murder of his father and incest with his mother are exemplary cases of unconsciously motivated acts. Freud returns to the "heroic" position: a subject is responsible also for the unintended consequences of his

1 In order to designate the act of the self-positing of the absolute I, Fichte is fully justified in using his neologism *Tat-Handlung* which unites the two aspects of *Handlung* and *Tat* – it is only in this primordial act that that *Handlung* and *Tat* fully overlap, i.e., that there is no gap between its intended goal and its actual consequences.



acts (slips of tongue, dreams, etc.) since they were motivated by unconscious desires. I bring you a glass of wine and I slip in front of you, spilling it on your shirt – thereby expressing my concealed hatred of you?

Even without considering unconscious motivations, we should also introduce here the difference between consequences which are non-intended in the sense of simple externality and consequences which, although not intended, proceed immanently from the process triggered by the agent. Let's return to the bell at the entrance to a house which is connected to a bomb – when I press it, the explosion ruins the building; but since I had no idea of this connection and just wanted to visit a friend in the house, I am in no way responsible for the catastrophic consequence. The case of Stalinism is fundamentally different: let's imagine an honest Communist fully engaged in working for the Soviet state in the 1920s – even if his sincere intention is to bring about a new just and free society, the actual outcome (Stalinist terror, gulags, etc.) is an immanent consequence of his activity, i.e., it was inscribed into the very immanent logic of the Soviet Communism. (Let us take an extreme case of the gap that separates *Handlung* from *Tat*: the Chinese Cultural Revolution. As a *Handlung*, it intended to revolutionize social relations in the direction of Communism, while as a *Tat*, its unintended ultimate consequence for which Mao was “objectively responsible” was the explosion of capitalism in China.)

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True, Hegel insists that the purpose and the end of an action must by their very nature be *general*, and so abstract, while what is actually accomplished must by its very nature be *fully determinate*, that is, concrete. But contingency does not only enter at the level of the circumstances of the actualization of an end: what if the contingent aspects of an action are the very inner intentions of its agents? It is in this sense that Hegel speaks about the “spiritual animal kingdom”, his term for the complex interaction of individuals in a market society: each individual participating in it is moved by egotist concerns (personal wealth, pleasures, power...), but the Whole of it regulated by the “invisible hand” of the Market actualizes universal welfare and progress. The further point here is that individual motivations and universal goal are necessarily disparate: common Good can realize itself only if individuals follow their particular egotist ends – if they directly want to act for the common Good, the result is *ad a rule* catastrophic... So it is not just that contingent individual goals reveal themselves to be means of the higher universal Goal, or, as Hegel put it, “the immediate character of the action in its further

content is reduced to a means. In so far as such an end is a finite one, it may in turn be reduced to a means to some further intention, and so on in an infinite progression". (Hegel 1991b: 150, § 122) One should make a step further here: what appears from the individual's standpoint a mere means is the true goal of the entire movement. As Marx put it, individuals engage in social productivity and develop means of production in order to satisfy their private needs and desires; but, from the standpoint of totality, their private needs and desires are themselves mere means to achieve the true goal, the development of social productivity.

### **Recollection, Forgiveness, Reconciliation**

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Here enters the Hegelian narrative of forgiveness through recollection: once a course of action is accomplished and its consequences, intended and unintended, laid out, it becomes possible to tell the story of how the initial intention got transformed in the course of its execution. There is no higher Idea which regulates the interaction between the initial idea-goal and its transformations through corrections: retroactively, the original goal has to be changed to fit the process, and unilateral acts are "forgiven" insofar as they can be shown to play a role in a wider process which actualizes a more fundamental goal.

Brandom's formula of reconciliation is the unity (mutual dependence) of creating and finding, of positing and presupposing. In a traditional universe, normative structures are presupposed as objective fact, while in modern alienation, they are reduced to expressions of subjective attitudes. The "reconciliation" is achieved when both aspects are perceived in their interaction and mutual dependence: there is no normative substance in itself, normative structures exist only through the constant (interaction) of individuals engaged in them; however, the necessary result of this interaction is what Dupuy calls the "self-transcendence" of a symbolic structure – to be operative, a normative system has to be perceived as autonomous and in this sense "alienated". A somewhat pathetic example: when a group of people fights for Communism, they of course know that this Idea exists only through their engagement, but they nonetheless relate to it as to a transcendent entity which regulates their lives and for which they may be even ready to sacrifice their lives. One should note here that, for Hegel, alienation is precisely the view which conceives objective normative structures as mere expressions/products of subjective activity, as its "reified" or "alienated" effects. In other words, overcoming alienation is for Hegel not the act of dissolving

the illusion of autonomy of normative structures but accepting this "alienation" as necessary. Spiritual Substance is Hegel's name for the "big Other", and insofar as the illusion of "big Other" is necessary for the functioning of the symbolic order, one should reject as pseudo-materialist the thought that want to dismiss this dimension. The big Other is effective, it exerts its efficiency in regulating real social processes, not in spite of its non-existence but *because* it doesn't exist – only an inexistent virtual order can do the job.

As expected, Brandom devalues the entire "hermeneutics of suspicion" (Marx-Nietzsche-Freud) as a version of the naturalist reduction of norms to causality, as the relativization of norms to the expression or effect of some non-normative actual process: for Marx, normative structures are part of ideological superstructure and as such conditioned by objective economic processes; for Freud, normative structures are conditioned by unconscious libidinal processes. In Hegel's terms, Freud thus (following Nietzsche) reduces "noble" consciousness to its "low" pathological motivations: moral altruism is sustained by envy and spirit of revenge, etc. But does Freud really do this? Here is how Brandom describes the judge who practices a hermeneutics of suspicion: "The judge exercises his own authority, attributing and holding the agent responsible for the action under a different kind of description, seeing it not as the acknowledgment of a norm but only the evincing of a desire or inclination." (Brandom, internet) Is the psychoanalyst (a psychoanalytic interpreter) such a judge? No, for a simple reason: psychoanalytic interpretation is not objective knowledge about what goes on in the patient – the proof of its truth is precisely and only in how the patient subjectively assumes it. In his (unpublished) Seminar XVIII on a "discourse which would not be that of a semblance", Lacan provided a succinct definition of the truth of interpretation in psychoanalysis: "Interpretation is not tested by a truth that would decide by yes or no, it unleashes truth as such. It is only true inasmuch as it is truly followed." (Lacan 1971) There is nothing "theological" in this precise formulation, only the insight into the properly dialectical unity of theory and practice in (not only) psychoanalytic interpretation: the "test" of the analyst's interpretation is in the truth effect it unleashes in the patient. This is how we should also (re)read Marx's Thesis XI: the "test" of Marxist theory is the truth effect it unleashes in its addressee (the proletarians), in transforming them into emancipatory revolutionary subjects. The *locus communis* "You have to see it to believe it!" should always be read together with its inversion "You have to believe [in] it to see it!" Although one may be tempted to oppose them as the

dogmatism of blind faith versus openness toward the unexpected, one should insist also on the truth of the second version: truth, as opposed to knowledge, is, like a Badiouian Event, something that only an engaged gaze, the gaze of a subject who "believes in it", can see. Think of love: in love, only the lover sees in the object of love that X which causes love, so the structure of love is the same as that of the Badiouian Event which also exists only for those who recognize themselves in it: there is no Event for a non-engaged objective observer.

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Incidentally, the same point can be made about traumatic experiences as the main figure of the external cause of a pathological development of a subject. In his analysis of "Wolfsman", Freud isolated as the early traumatic event that marked his life the fact that, as a child of 1 ½ years, he witnessed the parental *coitus a tergo* (sexual act in which the man penetrates the woman from behind). However, originally, when this scene took place, there was nothing traumatic in it: far from shattering the child, he just inscribed it into his memory as an event the sense of which was not clear at all to him. Only years later, when the child became obsessed with the question "where do children come from" and started to develop infantile sexual theories, did he draw out this memory in order to use it as a traumatic scene embodying the mystery of sexuality. The scene was traumatized, elevated into a traumatic Real, only retroactively, in order to help the child to cope with the impasse of his symbolic universe (his inability to find answers to the enigma of sexuality). So, again, the external cause (the traumatic experience) does not exert its causal power directly, its efficiency is always mediated by a subjectivized symbolic space which cannot be reduced to objective facts.

In the domain of politics, the hermeneutics of suspicion reaches its climax in Stalinism. The passage from Leninism to Stalinism also concerns the relationship between intended goal and unintended consequences. The Leninist category of "objective meaning" of your acts refers to the unintended but necessary consequences, as in "you may have acted out of your best humanitarian intentions, but your acts objectively served the class enemy" – the Party is an agent which has direct and privileged access to this "objective meaning". Stalinism brings us back to a perverted version of the pre-modern "heroic" attitude, i.e., it again closes the gap between subjective intentions and objective consequences: objective consequences are projected back into the agent as his/her (secret) intentions, as in "you pretended to act out of the best humanitarian intentions, but secretly you wanted to serve the class enemy".

With regard to the relationship between noble consciousness (taking the other's statements in the spirit of trust, accepting the normative commitment they declare) and the vicious consciousness (interpreting other's statements from the standpoint of irony, discerning beneath them "pathological" motivations (egotism, utilitarian interest, search for pleasures) or reducing them to effects of objective mechanisms), Brandom pulls the standard transcendental trick: in order to be taken seriously, even the most suspicious interpretation of our acts reducing them to lower motivations or objectively-determined mechanism already has to presuppose an attitude of trust, i.e., it has to presume that this interpretation itself is not just an expression of "lower" motivations but a deployment of serious rational argumentation:

we have always already implicitly committed ourselves to adopting the edelmütig stance, to identifying with the unity that action and consciousness involve, to understanding ourselves as genuinely binding ourselves by conceptual norms that we apply in acting intentionally and making judgments. [...] the determinate contentfulness of the thoughts and intentions even of the *niederträchtig* is in fact intelligible *only* from an edelmütig perspective. (Brandom, internet)

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Hegel and Brandom are here opposed in a way which is far from concerning just an accent: Brandom asserts the transcendental primacy of trust which is always-already presupposed by any reductionist-suspicious ironic attitude, while Hegel's entire effort goes into explaining why trust needs the detour through irony and suspicion to assert itself – it cannot stand on its own. The consequences of this shift are radical: when Brandom claims that Absolute Knowing stands for "a move from the relations between individuals and their conceptually articulated norms exhibiting the structure of *irony* to exhibiting the structure of *trust*", he thereby opens up the way to conceive Absolute Knowing as a promise of a future state of humanity in which modern alienation will be left behind and harmony will be reestablished. In his periodization of history, after traditional societies in which norms are taken as a substantial In-itself, and modern alienated societies in which norms are reduced to expressions of subjective attitudes, there comes the projected post-modern "final form of mutual recognition as reciprocal confession and forgiveness"<sup>2</sup>:

<sup>2</sup> Incidentally, what Hegel means by "recognition" is also something much more radical and disturbing than the liberal beauty of mutually recognizing free individuals: in his extreme but crucial case, execution (death punishment) of a criminal is the recognition of him/her as a free responsible human being – if we do not punish him arguing that he was a victim of circumstances, we deprive him of his rational freedom.

Unlike the earlier stories, this one outlines something that hasn't happened yet: a future development of Spirit, of which Hegel is the prophet: the making explicit of something already implicit, whose occurrence is to usher in the next phase in our history. (Brandom, internet)

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So what, precisely, is supposed to happen in this post-modern third stage? Here is Brandom's formula: "finding and making show up as two sides of one coin, two aspects of one process, whose two phases – experience and its recollection, lived forward and comprehended backward, the inhalation and exhalation that sustain the life of Spirit – are each both makings and findings." (Brandom, internet) The basic idea seems clear: traditional culture accepts norms (our normative substance) as substantially given, so they pre-exist us, we just have to find them; modern culture of alienation reduces them to an expression of our subjective attitudes, i.e., norms are something that we make, create; what is needed is a synthetic view which sees how our reality is "at once the institution and the application of conceptual norms, both a making and a finding of conceptual contents" (Brandom, internet): "Spirit exists insofar as we *make* it exist by *taking* it to exist." (Brandom, internet) But does this last proposition not indicate a necessary illusion? If we make it exist by taking it to exist, does this not mean that we can only make it exist by way of pretending that it already exists? It is as in the old Yugoslav joke about the conscript who pleaded insanity in order to avoid military service; his "symptom" was to compulsively examine every paper at his reach and exclaim "That's not it!"; when he is examined by the military psychiatrists, he does the same, so the psychiatrists finally give him a paper confirming that he is released from military service. The conscript reaches for it, examines it, and exclaims: "That's it!" Here, also, the search for an object itself generates this object.

Brandom is right to point out: "Geist as a whole has a history, and it is Hegel's view that in an important sense, that history boils down to one grand event. That event – the *only* thing that has ever really happened to Geist – is its structural transformation from a traditional to a modern form." (Brandom, internet) In a consequently Hegelian way, we should apply this insight also to what Brandom describes as the passage from modernity to post-modernity: post-modernity is not a "synthesis" of both extremes, traditional realism and modern subjectivism, it is not the unity of both one-sided positions; it is a self-relating repetition of the modernist break, its application to itself, it is modernity brought to conclusion.

So when Brandom evokes “a hypothetical future third age of Spirit”, one should raise the obvious Hegelian question: does such a reading not directly contradict Hegel's emphatic dismissal of the “desire to teach the world what it ought to be” from the “Preface” of his *Philosophy of Right*:

Philosophy, at any rate, always comes too late to perform this function. As the *thought* of the world, it appears only at a time when actuality has gone through its formative process and attained its completed state. [...] When philosophy paints its grey in grey, a shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognized, by the grey in grey of philosophy; the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk. (Hegel 1991b: 23)

Robert Pippin noted that, if Hegel is minimally consistent, this has to apply also to the notion of State deployed in his own *Philosophy of Right*: the fact that Hegel was able to deploy its concept means that “the onset of dusk” on what readers of Hegel usually perceive as a normative description of a model rational state. And the same should hold for any extrapolation of a non-alienated future from present tendencies: such mode of thinking (the logic of “now we are in a critical moment of utter alienation, and the possibility is open for us to act as agents of overcoming alienation”) is utterly foreign to Hegel who repeatedly emphasizes the retroactive nature of overcoming alienation: we overcome alienation through realizing that we've already overcome it. In other words, nothing “really changes” in overcoming alienation, we just shift our perspective and gain the insight into how what appears as alienation is the immanent condition of dis-alienation, is in itself already dis-alienation. It is in this sense that, in his “small” (*Encyclopaedia*) *Logic*, Hegel proposes his own version of *la verité surgit de la méprise*, ambiguously asserting that “only out of this error does the truth arise”:

In the sphere of the finite we can neither experience nor see that the purpose is genuinely attained. The accomplishing of the infinite purpose consists therefore only in sublating the illusion that it has not yet been accomplished. The good, the absolute good, fulfills itself eternally in the world, and the result is that it is already fulfilled in and for itself, and does not need to wait upon us for this to happen. This is the illusion in which we live, and at the same time it is this illusion alone that is the activating element upon which our interest in the world rests. It is within its own process that the Idea produces that illusion for itself; it posits an other confronting itself, and its action consists in sublating that illusion. Only from this error does the truth come forth, and herein lies our reconciliation with error and with finitude. Otherness or error, as sublated, is itself a necessary moment of the truth, which can only be in that it makes itself into its own result. (Hegel 1991a: 286, § 212, add.)

In short, the ultimate deception is not to see that one already has what one is looking for – like Christ's disciples who were awaiting his "real" reincarnation, blind for the fact that their collective already was the Holy Spirit, the return of the living Christ. Lebrun is thus justified in noting that the final reversal of the dialectical process, far from being a magic intervention of a *deus ex machina*, is a purely formal turnaround, a shift of perspective: the only thing that changes in the final reconciliation is the subject's standpoint, i.e., the subject endorses the loss, re-inscribes it as its triumph. Reconciliation is thus simultaneously less and more than the standard idea of overcoming an antagonism: less, because nothing "really changes"; more, because the subject of the process is deprived of its very (particular) substance. Recall the paradox of the process of apologizing: if I hurt someone with a rude remark, the proper thing for me to do is to offer him a sincere apology, and the proper thing for him to do is to say something like "Thanks, I appreciate it, but I wasn't offended, I knew you didn't mean it, so you really owe me no apology!" The point is, of course, that, although the final result is that no apology is needed, one has to go through the entire process of offering it: "you owe me no apology" can only be said after I DO offer an apology, so that, although, formally, "nothing happens", the offer of apology is proclaimed unnecessary, there is a gain at the end of the process (perhaps, even, the friendship is saved).

Out of which error, exactly, does the truth arise? Or, another version of the same question, "this is the illusion under which we live" – which illusion, exactly? The ambiguity is here radical. The predominant reading would have been the standard idealist-teleological one: the error resides in assuming that the infinite End is not already accomplished, that we are caught in an open-ended struggle with a real substantial enemy. In short, the illusion resides here in the perception of those caught in the struggle who think that the struggle is for the real and not already decided in advance – they don't see that what we, finite agents, perceive as an open struggle is, from the standpoint of the absolute Idea just a game the Idea is playing with itself. The Idea "posits" – builds – an external obstacle in order to overcome it and unite with itself... This, however, is only one aspect of the illusion, and the opposite illusion is no less wrong: the illusion that Truth is already here, that everything is fully predestined, decided in advance, that our struggles are just a game of no substantial importance – in this case, the Absolute remains a Substance which pre-determines all subjective agency, it is not yet conceived also as Subject. In other words: to remove the illusion that the infinite goal is not already accomplished, to ascertain that truth is already here, is in itself a performative



act: declaring something to be the case makes it the case. So both illusions are worse, to paraphrase Stalin – but how could both opposed versions be wrong? Is it not that either things are predetermined, decided in advance, or not? The solution is retroactivity: Truth is the process of its own becoming, it becomes what it is (or, rather, what it always-already was), not in the sense that it just deploys its immanent potentials, but in the more radical sense of gradually forming (building, constructing) its own “eternal” past. A thing becomes – not what it IS or what it will be but – what it always-already WAS, its Aristotelian essence (*to ti en einai*, “the what-it-was-to-be”, or *das zeitlos-gewesene Sein*, the “timelessly past being”, as Hegel translated it).

The obverse of this vision of a future state beyond alienation is that Brandom gets caught into a spurious infinite of recognition: the gap between intention and consequences of our actions is constitutive, we cannot ever reach full reconciliation, we are condemned to the infinite progress towards overcoming disparity, every agent has to trust forgiveness from the future figures of big Other. At every moment, we build a story of recollection which reconciles us with the past, but

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no such story is final. None anoints as concepts conceptions whose correct (according to the norms they are taken by their users, including the ones producing the retrospective rational reconstruction, to embody) application will not lead to incompatible commitments, the experience of error and failure showing the disparity between what things are for consciousness and what they are in themselves that must be confessed and forgiven anew. Each such story will itself eventually turn out to have crowned a defective conception with the label: what things are *in* themselves, the real concepts. The sense in which there is and can be no finally adequate set of determinate concepts (or conceptions) is visible prospectively, in the space *between* recollections, in the need of each forgiving judge himself to be forgiven in turn. (Brandom, internet)

The cognitive authority of the present judge with respect to past judges is thus conditioned on its recognition by future ones, implying “an implicit *confession* of the only partial success of each particular exercise of generous recollection”: “Such a confession is an invitation for us who come after him concretely to forgive him for the partial failure of his attempt to forgive, by telling a still better story. He trusts us to continue the conceptually magnanimous enterprise.” (Brandom, internet) Such a simple self-historicization/self-relativization is thoroughly non-Hegelian – it forgets that one overcomes disparity not by effectively overcoming it but by a shift of perspective which render visible disparity itself in its positive, enabling dimension.

Here is Brandom's concise description of the progress of knowledge as a continuous revision of what the object is for us: "one must exhibit the result of one's revision as *finding out* how things all along already were in themselves, what one was really talking and thinking *about*, what one was referring to by deploying the earlier, variously defective senses, the reality that was all along appearing, though in some aspects incompletely or incorrectly." (Brandom, internet) I find this passage profoundly ambiguous: is it to be read in the standard realist way (we are gradually approaching the object which is out there, all the time the same), or does the phrase "one must exhibit the result of one's revision as *finding out* how things all along already were in themselves" indicate a more refined position: "finding" how the object really is (and always-already was) in itself is a retroactive illusion, a way we necessarily (mis)perceive our process of knowledge:

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One of Hegel's most fundamental ideas is that the notion of content is intelligible in principle only in terms of the sort of *friction* between normative attitudes that shows up in cognitive experience in the collision of incompatible commitments *acknowledged* by one knower, and which we have come to see is rooted in the social-perspectival collision of commitments *acknowledged* and those *attributed* in practical experience of the disparity of *Handlung* and *Tat*. (Brandom, internet)

Brandom sees clearly the retroactive nature of the Hegelian teleology, i.e., he is well aware that the rational totality which emerges through historical recollection is a "retrospectively imputed plan":

the role of a given event in the evolving plan depends on *what else happens*. [...] As new consequences occur, the plan is altered, and with it the status of the earlier event as aiding in the successful execution of the plan. That status can be altered by other doings, which, in the context of the earlier one, open up some new practical possibilities and close others off. The significance of one event is never fully and finally settled. It is always open to influence by later events. (Brandom, internet)

The unsurpassable case of such a retroactive reversal of contingency into necessity in popular culture remains the ending of *Casablanca*: according to the popular myth, the main actors (Bergman, Bogart) didn't know to the very last days of shooting what the ending will be (will Bergman leave with her husband to Portugal, will she remain in Casablanca with Bogart, or will one of her male partners die?), but once the ending that we know now was chosen all preceding action seemed to lead to it, i.e., it appeared as the only "natural" ending. What this means is that the progression is "*retrospectively necessary*": "It is not the case that a given stage could have evolved in no other way than as to produce what appears as its successor."

It is therefore too simple to just distinguish two ontological levels, natural objects which are what they are independently of how they are “for us”, and spiritual objects which are created through our approach. This is the price that both Pippin and Brandom pay for their “renormalization” of Hegel as a thinker of discursive recognition: a regression into Kantian dualism of the domain/level of empirical reality and the separate normative domain of rational argumentation. Whatever Hegel is, such dualism is incompatible with his thought.

### Healing the Wound

Hegel's radical claim about the power of Spirit is that it can make our deeds “as if they had never happened” (Hegel 1977: 406, § 667): “The wounds of the Spirit heal, and leave no scars behind. The deed is not imperishable; it is taken back by Spirit into itself, and the aspect of individuality present in it, whether as intention or as an existent negativity and limitation, straightway vanishes.” (Hegel 1997: 407, § 669) Brandom again puts all his effort into the “renormalization” of this “crazy” claim; however, his version of recollection as healing the wounds generates a series of problems. First, in this version, recollection “ignores expressively retrograde experiences and instead traces out a trajectory of expressively progressive improvements in how things were for us that culminates in the way we currently take them to be in themselves”. (Brandom, internet) But what about extreme self-destructive moments that are part of Hegel's recollective narrative? What about self-destructive revolutionnary terror as the outcome of absolute Freedom? What about the absurd infinite judgment “Spirit is a bone”? They are both a deadlock, clearly superfluous, but precisely as such – as superfluous – they are necessary. We have to commit an error, to make a wrong choice, in order to be able to establish retroactively that it was superfluous to do it. In other words, the Hegelian recollection is not just the narrative structure in its retroactive “inner necessity”, purified of meaningless contingencies. On the contrary, the Hegelian recollection brings life back into a dead scheme by way of resuscitating it “in its becoming”, as Kierkegaard would have put it. It does not reduce the contingency of a process to its notional necessity, it restores the contingent process out of which necessity arose.

But the main point is that, for Hegel, wounds are healed in a much stronger sense than just as steps towards a higher unity: they literally disappear, they are “undone” – how? Recall Wagner's *“Die Wunde schließt der Speer*

*nur der sie schlug*" from the finale of *Parsifal* – Hegel says the same thing, although with the accent shifted in the opposite direction: the Spirit is itself the wound it tries to heal, i.e., the wound is self-inflicted. That is to say, what is "Spirit" at its most elementary? The "wound" of nature: subject is the immense – absolute – power of negativity, of introducing a gap/cut into the given-immediate substantial unity, the power of differentiating, of "abstracting", of tearing apart and treating as self-standing what in reality is part of an organic unity. Consequently, the Spirit heals its wound not by directly healing it, but by getting rid of the very full and sane Body into which the wound was cut. It is in this precise sense that, according to Hegel, »the wounds of the Spirit heal, and leave no scars behind«: Hegel's point is not that the Spirit heals its wounds so perfectly that, in a magic gesture of retroactive sublation, even their scars disappear; the point is rather that, in the course of a dialectical process, a shift of perspective occurs which makes the wound itself appear as its opposite – the wound itself is its own healing when perceived from another standpoint.

Was Malcolm X not following the same insight when he adopted X as his family name? The point of choosing X as his family name and thereby signaling that the slave traders who brought the enslaved Africans from their homeland brutally deprived them of their family and ethnic roots, of their entire cultural life-world, was not to mobilize the blacks to fight for the return to some primordial African roots, but precisely to seize the opening provided by X, an unknown new (lack of) identity engendered by the very process of slavery which made the African roots forever lost. The idea is that this X which deprives the blacks of their particular tradition offers a unique chance to redefine (reinvent) themselves, to freely form a new identity much more universal than white people's professed universality. – And does a homologous reversal not define the very core of the Christian experience? When a believer feels alone, abandoned by god, the Christian answer is not that he should purify himself and rejoice god, but that, in this very abandonment, he is already identified with god (the god who is abandoned by itself). It is also in this sense that, from the Christian standpoint, god gives humanity the supreme gift of freedom: when I feel alone, abandoned by god, lacking any protection and support from god, left to myself, to my own devices, I have to turn around the entire perspective and recognize in this lack of support and protection, in this being-left-to-one's-own-devices, the very figure of human autonomy and freedom.

Furthermore, we should test Brandom's reading of forgiveness and reconciliation at history's extreme phenomena: what would it have meant to forgive holocaust and get reconciled with it? Can we also imagine that this terrifying "wound" gets fully healed and disappears by way of becoming a moment of rationally-reconstructed history? Should Jews pardon the Nazis because, although in its direct intention, holocaust meant the total destruction of the Jews, its unintended consequence was the emergence of the state of Israel plus the prohibition of anti-Semitism (in parts of the world, at least)? Or, even more obscenely, should the Jews recognize their own complicity with holocaust (Heidegger's reading)? The easy way out is, of course, to claim that the rational recollection of history included only moments which contributed to the progress and ignore blind accidental deadlocks. But this easy way out obviously doesn't work: violent anti-Semitism is all too clearly part of Western spiritual history to be ignored like that, plus the unintended consequence of holocaust effectively was some level of ethical progress (higher awareness of the dangers of racism), so that, in a weird way, it did contribute to the ethical progress which wouldn't take place without it. Which means one cannot squeeze out of this deadlock by way of reading the phrase "wounds of the Spirit" literally, as referring openly to spiritual wounds proper (and dismissing holocaust as a pathology that doesn't really belong to the domain of spirit): holocaust IS part of the innermost history of our Spirit, of our collective spiritual substance.

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Slavoj Žižek

U odbranu Hegelovog ludila

Rezime

Članak predstavlja suočavanje sa Brendomovim čitanjem Hegelove *Fenomenologije duha*, odnosno sa njegovim pokušajem da sistematski „renormalizuje“ Hegela, t.j. da svede njegove ekstravagantne formulacije na kriterijume zdravog razuma. Članak analizira brojne Brendomove „domestifikacije“ Hegelovih spekulativnih pojmova: samosvest, određenu negaciju, posredovanje, stvar samu, delanje, spoznaj, Duh, izmirenje, istoriju. Na osnovu primera iz Marksa, Frojda, strukturalizma, Levi-Strosa, Altisera, Lakana, Adorna, tekst brani Hegelovo „ludilo“, kao ireduktibilno spekulativno i neinterpretativno jezgro njegove filozofije. Hegelove izjave nas moraju šokirati i taj eksces ne može biti objašnjen kroz interpretaciju, jer istina koju te izjave saopštavaju zavisi upravo od njega.

**Ključne reči:** Hegel, Brendom, stvar sama, delanje, istorija

Gregor Moder

## Catherine Malabou's Hegel: One or Several Plasticities?

**Abstract** *Through an original and extraordinarily fruitful reading of the Hegelian conception of negativity, Catherine Malabou developed the concept of plasticity which she keeps working on as one of her cardinal concepts even to this day. Engaging in the problematic of unity in Hegel, the paper takes on the task of trying to answer the question whether plasticity is one or are there several plasticities. The author argues that one must be careful not to reduce the inherent multiple of plasticity to a single plasticity which becomes plasticity par excellence: the plasticity of plastic explosion, of an abrupt and absolute break, to be distinguished from a creative or productive plasticity of habit. Malabou claimed that Hegel was – contrary to what Deleuz read in him – a philosopher of conceptual multitude as a multitude which cannot be reduced to only one image, the image of unity. If this is true, then the concept of plasticity itself with which she grasped the essence of Hegel's dialectics, should be understood at least as a “unity in conflict”, if not as an inorganic, inhomogeneous, composed unity – and perhaps even as a unity of the pack.*

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**Keywords:** *plasticity, negativity, explosion, sculpture, kenosis*

One or several plasticities? That is the question that this essay will put to Catherine Malabou, miming the well-known one that she asked Gilles Deleuze at the beginning of “Who’s Afraid of Hegelian Wolves?” (Malabou 1997: 114). Her question begins a critical analysis of Deleuze’s treatment of Hegel, an analysis that seeks to show that the ultimate aim of Deleuze’s reading is to reduce the multiplicity of Hegelian thought to a simplified logical unity. She thus aims to demonstrate that Hegel was to Deleuze what the white whale was to the captain Ahab from the Melville’s novel, the whale that had to be hunted without respite in order for his own theory to function at all. The structure of the question I am asking here is redoubled; when Malabou put her question to Deleuze, she herself mimed the well-known question Deleuze and Guattari put to Freud in the first chapter of their *A Thousand Plateaus*. That book began with the question of one or several wolves; Deleuze and Guattari were very critical of what they saw in Freud’s analysis of the Wolfman as a tendency in psychoanalysis to reduce

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the infinite multiplicity of unconscious affects to the logical unity of a signifier that always ends up having the traits of the father (Deleuze, Guattari 1980: 40–41). Just as Freud, in their view, reduced the pack of wolves, step by step, to only one wolf-father, so did Deleuze, in Malabou's opinion, reduce the Hegelian multiplicity. She writes:

Hegel never has a chance to get away. Let us imagine for a moment that a student confides in Deleuze, saying that in reading Hegel she sees, if not wolves, at least a pack of something. Let us suppose that this student adds that she considers the Hegelian system not to be like a tree, like a uncentred thinking, but a process of distribution of singularities, the regulated explosion of an energy free of all fixity, an economy of *fluidity* of the real and of thinking; that she is particularly interested in Hegel's preoccupation with "fluidifying solidified thinking", with dispossessing consciousness of its mastery. Would not Deleuze reply that it is impossible to uncover something like a pack or band within the dialectic? "What is it I see, then?" the student would ask. "You see a camel, an ox, an ass. Several animals, perhaps, but a single figure: that, precisely, of the unity that lays claim to its burden, its saddlebags, its harness, and moos, bleats, and brays." (Malabou 1997: 117)

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The student does not read Hegel according to a figure of unity, but rather through the lens of "regulated explosion of an energy free of all fixity", as "an economy of *fluidity* of the real and of thinking". These words, coming from the lips of a hypothetical student of Deleuze, in fact express Malabou's own reading of Hegel as she developed it in her famous work *The Future of Hegel* (Malabou 1996). The phrase "explosion" works there in an even less metaphorical context, that of plastic explosive, which is her name for a particular problem in the development of the dialectic. This is because the concept with which she grasped the Hegelian dialectic, developed in close proximity to some concepts of Deleuzian philosophy, she calls plasticity. And this is why I ask: One or several plasticities?

When I ask whether plasticity is one and one alone, or are there perhaps several plasticities, I implicitly propose that the multiplicity, specific to the concept of plasticity as she herself developed and defended it, should not be reduced to only one plasticity, plasticity of all plasticities, plasticity *par excellence*: namely, the plasticity of explosion, of an abrupt and sudden break, of a pure and immediate detachment. If Hegel, contrary to the Deleuzian reading, was a philosopher of conceptual multiplicity, then perhaps also the concept of plasticity with which Malabou grasped the essence of his dialectics should be conceptualized at least as a conflictual unity, if not as an inorganic, inhomogeneous, composed unity – as a unity of the pack.



The task of this paper is therefore to engage the concept of plasticity in Malabou's work and to understand why explosive plasticity became the plasticity *par excellence*. But while the task may be simple, the answer cannot be, by the very nature of things. It seems that it revolves around the relationship between the One and the multiple and therefore addresses one of the most important questions of Hegelian philosophy: How to think oneness? While the critics of Hegelian dialectics in the twentieth century – Deleuze, Althusser and his school, and before them also Heidegger – saw in it the ultimate teleological structure of unification into an all-encompassing unity, in a closed totality, a series of contemporary Hegelians defended the position that the whole in question is not a perfect, seamless whole, that the Hegelian one is a split one, and that the Hegelian End should not be thought without the process that brought it about.<sup>1</sup> We can consider Malabou's concept of plasticity precisely as an attempt to think a oneness that is not in itself "one". This is what is at stake in the quoted passage: the explosion and the process of fluidification are precisely two ways to think original unity as something that is in itself a figure of non-homogeneity, something non-unitary. But let me spell out in advance the answer that is implicit in my question: I think that plasticity in Malabou is ultimately in danger of being overly "unified", that it does not exhibit enough excess. In my reading, Hegelian thought is fundamentally characterized by a tension or a contradiction between the goal and the getting there, between the whole and what we could call the "leaking out". What is at stake for Hegel is not pure becoming, but rather the paradoxical in-between of being and becoming; it is not pure fluid, but rather the in-between of a monolith and a pure fluid. At the level of an image, of visualization, plastic explosive is a very good illustration of the unity of the substance and its fluidification. In our mind, we can picture hard stone change into a cloud of dust in just a few moments, as for instance when an "eternal" rock on the hillside is blown to pieces. But if we follow Malabou's argument, such an image is actually misleading. What is at stake with her concept of explosive plasticity is not the paradoxical unity of unity and a split, of difference and identity,

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1 One must underscore the continuous efforts of Slavoj Žižek to support these points, mostly by linking the Hegelian totality to the Lacanian concept of non-All: "The conclusion to be drawn is that, for the very same reason, the Hegelian 'totality' is also 'non-All'" (Žižek, 2012: 76–77). See also: "What Hegel rejects is precisely such a totalization—from-the-future; the only totality accessible to us is the flawed totality of the present, and the task of Thought is to 'recognize the Heart in the Cross of the present,' to grasp how *the Totality of the Present is complete in its very incompleteness*, how this Totality is sustained by those very features which appear as its obstacles or fatal flaws" (Žižek 2012: 260).

but rather the question of how to think the point of an absolute break, the point of no return – perhaps even of no return to dialectics itself!<sup>2</sup> But these considerations are too hasty and pre-emptive.

### Plasticity and the future of Hegel

The question raised at the beginning of *The Future of Hegel* sounds obvious: Does Hegel's philosophy have a future? Malabou claims that the answer is affirmative only if we demonstrate that it is possible to think the temporal extension of the future in Hegel's philosophy itself. And that, in turn, is only possible if such extension is conceptualized as aleatory or as something completely unexpected, as something irreducible to a series of logically and historically grounded steps and processes, or in her own words: she is interested in "the excess of the future over the future" (Malabou 1996: 6). The capacity for something absolutely heterogeneous is practically demanded of the future by the well-grounded and logical series, for if this is not the case, the idea of future is emptied of its futurity and becomes something plainly given, even if indeed delayed for the moment. One of Heidegger's objections to Hegel was precisely the objection that Hegel was a thinker of the past, a philosopher that could only think in the mode of the past. This objection influenced an entire tradition of readings in French philosophy that reproached Hegel, and this is why Malabou decided to demonstrate the capacity of Hegel's philosophy to think the future, to think accident and surprise – with the concept of plasticity. In traditional metaphysics, accident and surprise are typical forms of something negated, unstable and vanishing; the radical Eleatic metaphysics considered them as nothing at all. By formulating the concept of plasticity, however, Malabou did not only put them on center stage, so to speak, but also snatched them from the field of traditional metaphysics. The philosophy of accident and surprise is not a mere re-formulation of metaphysics itself, its ultimate variation; it is the genuine founding of a new discourse.

Speaking in broad terms, what Malabou thinks of as plasticity in Hegel is what we could call *negativity* (in the specific Hegelian meaning of the term). While Hegel's theological critics claimed, for instance, that his idea of negativity within God inscribes an external flaw or imperfection or even a "hunger for being" into this supreme being (Malabou 1996, 98),

2 Malabou insists on this point when defending Hegel from Heidegger's criticism, arguing that absolute knowledge does not simply take the process back to its beginning, but rather transforms it radically. See: Malabou 1996: 144ff.

Malabou defended Hegel, claiming that the negativity within God should not be considered as his passivity, but rather as the plasticity of God, that is to say, as the very productive capacity of God.

[F]or Hegel, the divine negativity, conceived in its most radical form, does not manifest the lack or the passivity, but rather the *plasticity* of God (Malabou 1996: 104).

In a very similar move, Hegel's critics claimed that his explanation of the unmovable mover and of the working of the mind in Aristotle either inscribes passivity into a dimension of pure activity, or is an anachronistic demand by the concepts of German Idealism on Aristotle's text. Here again, Malabou defended Hegel by insisting that what Hegel argues for is not to be understood as passivity, but rather as something in between passivity and activity, as plasticity (Malabou 1996: 53–54). And again, we must add, plasticity functions as the proper concept of productivity in Hegel.

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This allows us to make a general statement that negativity for Hegel does not involve imperfection or passivity, but plasticity. But what exactly does this mean? The term “plasticity” was first introduced by Malabou in its usual context as the “plastic arts” where it implies a duality, since it can refer to that which in the process of molding the clay, for instance, *receives* form, as well as to that which *gives* form. Already in this widely used meaning, a paradoxical unity of the active and the passive is expressed in the term. Simultaneous to the immediate context of the arts of sculpturing, painting and architecture, the term plasticity can refer to the process of formation in education and culture. Malabou exposed and discussed a vast multiplicity of plasticities, ranging from the plastic arts to plastic upbringing, to synthetic materials and to plastic explosive. She concludes that the term plasticity is itself plastic:

The plasticity of the word itself draws it to extremes, both to those concrete shapes in which form is crystallized (sculpture) and to the annihilation of all form (the bomb). (Malabou 1996: 9)

This formulation already exposes the primary contestation between two extremes in the multiple uses of plasticity. The plasticity of sculpture is something quite different from the plasticity of plastic explosive. While the former is the paradoxical interplay of giving and receiving form, the latter is an abrupt, “explosive”, sudden and absolute transformation, a radical break with all form. For Malabou, plasticity is dialectical:

The process of plasticity is dialectical because the operations which constitute it, the seizure of form and the annihilation of all form, emergence and explosion, are contradictory. (Malabou 1996: 12)

Let me formulate a possible – yet in the ultimate instance, as I hope to demonstrate, unjustified – objection to Malabou's exposition. It may seem that plastic explosive is only linked to the problematic of plasticity by pure coincidence, at least insofar as we follow the actual use of the term. In the French expression "*plastic*" which denotes plastic explosive and "*plasticage*" which denotes an explosion of the plastic explosive, the difference between an explosive and something plastic is obscured. One should note, however, that both of these terms originate from the English expression "plastic explosive". And surely, what is plastic about plastic explosive is some plastic material that can be molded, just like Plasticine or dough. This substance is added to the explosive precisely because of its plasticity. To make it quite clear: plastic explosive is a mixture of *two* substances, the explosive and the plasticizer. But even if we consider plastic explosive as *one* substance, we should still distinguish its characteristic of being plastic from its characteristic of being explosive. Not everything that is plastic explodes, just as not everything that is explosive is plastic (moldable, fluid). One could therefore accuse Malabou of attributing the capacity of being explosive to plasticity itself, whereas in fact there is only a coincidental link between the two. It is like drawing the false conclusion that human beings are something Socratic simply because Socrates is a human being. What if we had on our hands, instead of the plastic explosive, an ordinary plastic duck? Would this indicate that plasticity is something that essentially quacks? Of course not. And so we will have to admit that plastic explosive does not indicate that the possibility of an explosion, "the capacity to annihilate all form", is something that essentially determines plasticity. *And yet, Malabou claims precisely this.* It seems that she introduced in her series of examples of plasticity, which consistently referred to something moldable, to the interplay of giving and receiving form – sculpture, silicone implants, education – an alien element (the explosive). And as if this was not enough, she declared this alien element plastic *par excellence*, the ultimate plasticity. As if that which stands out of the series because of its oddity suddenly stood out because of its paradigmatic character.

By the end of this inquiry, the production of a new type of discursivity will be revealed as the plastic operation *par excellence*, as powerful as the force of dynamite, exploding whole centuries of discourse. (Malabou 1996: 134)

In *The Future of Hegel*, this possible reproach remains without an explicit answer. To make it even worse, while Malabou apparently considers the crystallized sculpture and the fluidifying explosion in an opposition

that defines dialectical procedure, it has to be pointed out that the sculpture can function as a dialectical example even without any reference to explosion. With sculpture, there is the unity of giving and receiving form, there is Hegel's idea of sculpture as a paradoxical unity of universality and particularity, and there is more. The sculptor Auguste Rodin famously insisted that the documentary photographs of a horse in gallop, showing that at least one of the legs is always touching the ground, actually distort the reality of movement, because they show movement resembling "the servants of the Sleeping Beauty, who were all suddenly struck motionless in the midst of their occupations" (Rodin 1911: 32). This is why he favored the traditional (but factually inaccurate) depiction of a horse in gallop, with all four legs in the air; the plastic artist thus created a synthesis of several motions of the body in one painting or sculpture. For Rodin, a sculpture is apparently never merely a "crystallized form", but a paradoxical synthesis that captures movement in a seemingly static, unmovable, unchangeable form.

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So why is the plasticity of explosion so important that it becomes the paradigmatic plasticity? The answer to this is much more direct in Malabou's essays on the ontology of accident (Malabou 2009). She writes quite frankly in the very first paragraphs that to speak about destruction or annihilation as something that pertains to plasticity is certainly unusual. Explosion, rupture, clear cut, a complete metamorphosis without transition and without mediation – these are the typical images of what she calls "destructive plasticity", a plasticity that, in her own words, has never received a name in psychoanalysis, neurology, in the arts, in the sciences, in medicine, in education or indeed in any other field:

As I said, we usually do not talk about plasticity in this case any more. The explosive, destructive and disorganizing power that is perhaps virtually present in all of us, susceptible to manifesting itself, materializing or actualizing itself at any moment, has never received a name in any domain whatsoever. (Malabou 2009: 12)

And yet Malabou not only insists on the point that the capacity to explode at any moment is a mode of plasticity, but also on the much stronger point that destructive plasticity is the plasticity *par excellence*. The contradiction between the plasticity of the sculpture and plasticity of explosion is made even more explicit and precise. She declares that what we usually understand as plasticity is a creative or affirmative plasticity and separates it from negative plasticity. On the one hand, there is the "normal", creative, positive plasticity of "equilibrium", of history and identity; on the other hand, which is what she is interested in, there is sudden

destruction, annihilation, the rupture of continuity. She lists and examines the following examples of the negative plasticity: Alzheimer's disease, brain-damage, severe trauma, and aging. She found one of the most effective examples of the sudden and absolute metamorphosis in the history of literature in the first line of Kafka's famous *Metamorphosis*: "When Gregor Samsa woke one morning from uneasy dreams, he found himself transformed into some kind of monstrous vermin" (Kafka 1915: 29).<sup>3</sup>

This seems to indicate that we can productively talk about plasticity as something explosive only in the extreme case where the explosive nature of plasticity is understood as the essence of plasticity in general. This takes us back to our question: Why is destructive plasticity paradigmatic? Why can it function as the key to the concept of plasticity as such – and therefore also to productive plasticity?

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### **Man, God, Philosopher**

Malabou determines Hegel's own use of the term plasticity in three related areas, all of which exploit the common meaning of the capacity to both give and receive form (Malabou 1996: 9–13). The first area is from *Aesthetics* where Hegel discusses the art of sculpture – for him, plasticity is best expressed there (Hegel 1970, vol. 14: 355). The second use immediately follows from the first one: what Hegel calls substantial or exemplary individuals of the ancient Greek world, – Pericles, Sophocles, Socrates –, are literally to be thought as *statues*. This is because their substance is not rigid and unmovable: these individuals have in some sense formed, molded themselves; they are a self-molding substance (Hegel 1970, vol. 14: 374). But the most important for Malabou is the area she calls philosophical plasticity. This is revealed in Hegel's position from the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* that only philosophical statements are truly plastic (Hegel 1970, vol. 3: 60). For Hegel, a philosophical phrase never simply *states* its truth, but always already implies a demand to *produce* that truth. I believe that these outlines in the Preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit* constitute the fundamental position that was later adopted by Gadamer in his philosophical hermeneutics. But we could also distinguish this character of truth in a Hegelian philosophical proposition, in the manner of J. L. Austin, as its performativity, its capacity to distinguish itself from true statements, like the one that one expects

3 Malabou adds, though, that insofar as Gregor remembers his former life and regrets losing it, his case does not really fit well with the point she is developing, one about an absolute transformation without any continuity (Malabou 2009: 24).

as the answer to the question "When was Caesar born?"<sup>4</sup> We could say that for Hegel, the truth must be performed – and this is precisely what is at stake in plasticity as the interplay of giving and receiving form.

Hegel's own use of the term plasticity is therefore limited to what Malabou calls productive or creative plasticity. What she calls destructive plasticity is simply dialectics for Hegel, or negation. Malabou lists and examines three chief conceptualizations of plasticity that can be applied to the corpus of Hegel's work. They are discussed under the figures of Man, God, and Philosopher. She maintains that there is no hierarchy between these three plasticities, but rather radical historical ruptures that demarcate the epochs of spirit, whereby Man refers to Antiquity, God to Christianity, and Philosopher to the Future of Hegel.

The plasticity of Man as the plasticity of the epoch of Greek Antiquity is more or less in accord with Hegel's own use of the term. She explains it with reference to the question of habit, especially in relation to Hegel's reading of Aristotle's *nous*. Habit is a typically Deleuzian theme and it is no surprise that she draws to an extent from the concept of virtuality (Malabou 1996: 45) as a specific kind of potentiality, as a potentiality that does not actualize itself but rather functions and produces effects precisely as a potentiality (Deleuze, 1968: 134–139). In the discussion on Aristotle's *entelechy*, she describes the special position of an in between potential and the actual as a "reserve of the future" (Malabou 1996: 50). As neither reserve of the future nor virtuality imply anything like a radical discontinuity or annihilation of all form, the domain of habit apparently falls completely in the realm of "creative" plasticity.

The concept of plasticity related to the epoch of Man is best expressed in sculpture, insofar as it reveals subjectivity as a plastic, self-molding substance. But in the epoch of God, as Malabou explains it, there is a shift in the relationship between substance and subject. The central concept of the epoch becomes the concept of *kenosis*, but not only in its traditional meaning of the self-humiliation and the self-emptying of God, but also and particularly in the meaning of the death of God. To develop this radical understanding of kenosis, Hegel evoked protestant hymns that described the death of Christ on the cross as the death of God. He explained this religious feeling as not only the death of Christ as a man, but precisely as the death of the Divine itself – so that the death of Christ implies the death of God the Father himself. For Hegel, one could claim,

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4 This is Hegel's own example from *Phenomenology of Spirit*, see: Hegel 1970, vol. 3: §40.

kenosis is always already a kenosis of kenosis. In its radical meaning, expressed by the Crucifixion, kenosis is the emptying of the emptying itself, it is the death of death itself. This is why, for Hegel, the meta-physical foundation of the Christian Easter mystery is a negation of negation. The idea of Divine Resurrection is itself only possible on the grounds of a radical understanding of kenosis as the Death of God. Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection coincide in the Hegelian concept of kenosis as an event that is not merely an external occurrence with regard to God, but is rather an internal event within God: God adopts contingent, particular being and through such self-emptying saves himself from remaining a purely abstract God. We could say that it is this internal externality of God is what Malabou calls his plasticity.

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But this radical concept of kenosis explains only one side of the plasticity of God. It corresponds to the concept of subjectivity that was developed by German Idealists. Malabou's key reference to this "inverse side" of kenosis is Hegel's text *Faith and Knowledge* where Hegel points out a specific congruity between God and the subject in the Modern Age.<sup>5</sup> Just as the religion of the Modern Age is marked by the feeling of the death of God, so the (Kantian) subject of the Modern Age as the subject of knowledge is forced to admit that it is incapable of autonomous foundation, that it requires an external foundation – such as for instance in faith (*Glauben*), as Jacobi eagerly supplied. Just as we can speak of God's self-alienation in the Incarnation, we can also speak about a specific emptiness at the foundation of Modern-Age subjectivity: the void, opaqueness, and indeterminateness of its foundation. This is why Malabou underlines the connection between kenosis on the one hand and the aspiration of reason in the Modern-Age to limit itself by an unreachable Beyond (Malabou 1996: 104; 111). Moreover, her concept of plasticity in the epoch of God is precisely a co-implication of the negativity of God and the negativity of subjectivity in the Modern-Age, a correspondence between the kenosis of God and the kenosis of the subject.

While the plasticity of habit implied what we could call a *circulation* of giving and receiving form, the plasticity of kenosis cannot be described in such terms. This is because the concept of time in the epoch of Modernity is different from the concept of time in the epoch of Greek Antiquity. What is at stake is no longer a cyclical or repetitive temporality of habit, but a linear temporality of Incarnation as a unique, singular

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5 Published in: Hegel 1970, vol. 2.



event that opens up the space of Meaning. Nevertheless, Malabou indicates that the concept of plasticity in this epoch is still to be considered as an interplay of giving and receiving form (and therefore in accord with the usual understanding of the word plastic). She points out that the negativity within God, his self-alienation in the suffering (*Entäusserung*, as Luther puts it) does not imply a passivity of God; since God in Hegel must be capable of producing himself, the negativity in him is in fact the very condition of spontaneity and activity. This play of negation and the negation of negation is what allows us to use the term plasticity in the case of kenosis, even though this process is neither reversible nor repeatable.

It is only when Malabou goes on to explain the Hegelian concept of absolute knowledge as the third and final epoch of plasticity that this idea fully addresses and answers the question of the future of Hegel. If in the epoch of sculpture plasticity was considered from the perspective of the “becoming essential of the accident” (since a sculpture expresses the universality of an individual), and if in the epoch of kenosis plasticity was considered from the perspective of the “becoming accidental of the essence” (since Incarnation is a self-alienation of God in something accidental), then it is the epoch of absolute knowledge that reveals the perspective which we could call the perspective of the future. Malabou writes:

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The process of substance's self-determination leans from side to side. Of necessity, one of its slopes will become larger than the other: either the “becoming essential of the accident” in the Greek moment of subjectivity, or the “becoming accidental of essence” in the modern moment. (Malabou 1996: 188)

It is the concept of absolute knowledge that reveals plasticity *par excellence*. It is only the plasticity of absolute knowledge that reveals the *explosiveness* of plasticity which was what was at stake from the beginning. And it is precisely here that the concept of plasticity becomes the very explosive force that disintegrates the historically anterior plasticities – those of the sculpture and kenosis – and makes them but moments in one Plasticity, which is the plasticity of plastic explosive.

The most important novelty of absolute knowledge in the development in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is its absoluteness. Malabou explained it with reference to Hegel's infamous concept of sublation (*Aufhebung*), a process that both eliminates and preserves the elements in a contradiction. As Malabou explains, absolute knowledge is the point where the entire historical-logical process of sublations is itself sublated: eliminated and transformed (Malabou 1996: 145). The most important point that

Malabou maintains is this: if we interpret absolute knowledge to be simply a point at which the dialectical process is referred back to its beginning, than that point cannot be called the absolute, but only a relative point. Now, it is clear that in Hegel, a return to beginning is never a complete return to the starting point. A circulation is therefore a misrepresentation of the dialectical process, even though the metaphor of the circle was used by Hegel himself. In a dialectical "circle", what circulates is transformed and so the result is never the same as the beginning. But for Malabou, this idea of the structure of dialectics is still problematic, insofar as it never submits dialectics itself to this dialectical process! She insists that the series of sublations must itself be sublated, absolutely sublated. Dialectics must operate on itself and produce something new from itself in this Grand Finale. The point of absolute knowledge is therefore a point in which dialectics itself is transformed:

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Far from enforcing a violent stoppage of the dialectical progress, the advent of Absolute Knowledge will imply instead the exact opposite: its metamorphosis. Dialectical sublation will become absolute sublation – its own absolution. (Malabou 1996: 155)

This, and only this, brings about plasticity *par excellence*: it is no longer a plastic substance nor a plastic subjectivity, it is the plasticity of plasticity itself. The plastic explosive, evoking a radical destruction of form, is plastic in the emphatic meaning of the term precisely because it implies a radical and absolute transformation, a transformation of the circularity of transformation, a transformation of the interplay of giving and receiving form and a formation of something completely new and unexpected. Moreover, the explosive formation is the incarnation of the idea of the "aleatoric" substance and is the foundation of the concept of "explosive subjectivity" which, for Malabou, is what is at stake in her reading of Hegel (Malabou 1996: 162; 187). Explosive plasticity is therefore the foundation of her concept of an explosive subject, a subject marked by a permanent threat of accidental and complete transformation – just as an Alzheimer's patient will one morning wake up from his or her dreams transformed into someone else, without any connection to his or her previous identity.

Malabou's concept of plasticity, as it is developed in *The Future of Hegel*, can be demonstrated in a table (see below). Why such systematization? Firstly, because I think it really does demonstrate the three epochs of her concept of plasticity in a concise and fairly reliable manner. But more importantly, because I wish to stress the systemic character that permeates her concept of plasticity. She writes explicitly that the inter-relations

between the epochs do not imply a hierarchical progress, but rather a radical break. But even a non-hierarchical system implies a systemic unity; and for Malabou, systemic unity is the unity of paradigmatic plasticity, of plasticity *par excellence*: the plastic explosive. But does not the strong systemic unity, centered around one concept, expose Hegel to the objection raised by Gilles Deleuze (and many others), the objection that Hegelian dialectics is in principle a reduction to one – that is, to the very objection that she refuted so eloquently in her paper on Hegelian wolves, the paper on the irreducible multiplicity of Hegelian concept?

Table: System of Plasticity

Name	Epoch	Field	Image	Explication	Temporality
Man	Greeks	Art	Sculpture	Habit	Circular Time
God	Modernity	Religion	Incarnation	Kenosis	Linear Time
Philosopher	The Future of Hegel	Philosophy	Explosion	Absolute Knowledge	Accident (Punctual Time)

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## Plasticity and Plasticities

We can only agree with and must underline Malabou's idea of the punctual character of absolute knowledge. It is not knowledge with a specific content, but rather a turning point that renders knowledge absolute, without increasing it or decreasing it in any way. One may suggest that the difference between Deleuze as a philosopher of affirmation and Hegel as a philosopher of negation can be recognized precisely as the difference between an infinite and unstoppable production of positive difference on the one hand and the negative concepts of "absolute beginning" and "absolute ending" on the other. But this opposition would not do justice to Hegelian dialectics. Because what is at stake for Hegel is precisely how to think both the process *and* its radical ending. We may describe absolute knowledge precisely as an attempt to think this pair in unity: a unity of a clean, abrupt cut and the process that led to it.

In light of these considerations, let us examine Malabou's idea of the "explosiveness" of absolute knowledge, of the point where dialectics finally submits itself to itself and irreversibly transforms itself. The question is this: can Hegel's dialectic really be thought as something which is *not* already involved in that object of which it itself is dialectics? I believe the only possible answer to this is an emphatic no. And yet, it seems that Malabou is hinting precisely in this direction by separating *relative sublation* from an

*absolute sublation*, where it is only the latter that is capable of sublating itself. But the working and movement of Hegelian dialectics is always itself included in what it works on and what it moves. It can never be reduced to a pure method, to an external procedure that will supposedly bring us closer to the truth, for it always inhabits the gap between truth and method.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the Hegelian dialectic is a production of truth that it is supposedly only uncovering. Or, from the perspective of truth: the truth is never a naked truth; it is never a pure result of the uncovering of truth, because the uncovering constitutes the truth. Truth is not naked; it is already clothed in its expressions; and moreover, it is nothing but this clothing. Does it not follow from this that the Hegelian dialectic is, in a way, an “absolute process”? That is to say, one can never progress in dialectics if one does not assume that the dialectic has already intervened in its object.<sup>7</sup> In the case of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* one could even say that a step forward in dialectics is precisely the realization that the dialectic has already intervened in its object. In other words, a step forward is possible only as a realization that a step forward was always already made, albeit unconsciously or as an undesired, unforeseen side-effect. We can understand absolute knowledge itself exactly in this way: not as a foreseeable *telos* of an automatic mechanical process but as a true surprise and perhaps even as an act of chance that follows from a completely logical path.

But if Hegelian dialectics has always, by definition, already permeated its object, then the idea of Absolute Knowledge as the point where dialectics takes itself as its object does not differ from any other point and cannot be grasped as its final step. There is no such thing as a “relative sublation”, because every sublation is also a sublation of sublation itself and therefore an “absolute sublation”. If the movement of sublations remains beyond what it sublates, then this is indeed only a mechanical procedure, a prescribed method, and not true dialectics. But this also means that the concept of absolute knowledge, insofar as we explain it with the help of explosive plasticity, cannot count as a paradigmatic determination of Hegelian dialectics. The special case of Absolute Knowledge is not in what

6 I am, of course, hinting at Hans-Georg Gadamer's famous work, where the principle thesis is that human sciences differ from natural sciences in that there cannot be a clear distinction from truth and method (Gadamer 1960).

7 This is why Althusser criticized Hegel with the famous separation of the real object from the object of knowledge: “Marx rejected the Hegelian confusion which identifies the real object with the object of knowledge, the real process with the knowledge process” (Althusser 1968: 40). Althusser's criticism is justified to the extent that such a distinction is indeed impossible in Hegel.

Malabou calls “absolute sublation”, but rather in that it is a concept of the End, an Absolute End that is nevertheless a logical consequence of the process that brought to it.

Our understanding of Hegel can benefit significantly from the image and the concept of an explosion, insofar as it designates such a radical and abrupt ending, or the formal gesture of a punctuation mark. But what makes the plasticity of Absolute Knowledge different from other plasticities is *not* that it is an absolute case of plasticity, while others are only relative. Rather, it is the *abruptness* of the advent of Absolute Knowledge that makes it different from the *process* of dialectics as a process of transformation and self-transformation. The value of the concept of explosive plasticity lies perhaps precisely in its separation from the concept of productive plasticity, which is also irreducible to it.

To reject the idea of explosive plasticity as the plasticity *par excellence* it is therefore quite enough to bring to the fore the idea of plasticity that is not based on the logic of explosion. And this work was already done by Malabou, as pointed out before: to analyze the dialectical nature of a sculpture as plastic art we do not need to suppose the explosiveness of that sculpture. Hegel's own idea of the plastic individuals of the Greek Antiquity even excludes, rather than requires, a possibility of an abrupt, radical and aleatory change of their character, an ontology of accident, such as is perhaps required to analyze the cases of Alzheimer patients, the brain-damaged, and the aged. More importantly, even the plasticity of habit, such as was developed by Malabou, does not rest on the ontology of explosion. Perhaps it is even completely alien to it: the transformation at work in the domain of habit resembles much more the gradual progress of a river making its way through rock; and sudden and absolute transformation are precisely what breaks a habit, not what constitutes it. We can only agree that the plasticity of habit and the plasticity of explosion should be read together – but not because they compose a dialectical contradiction, sublated in one of its terms.

Undoubtedly, the systemization of knowledge and the encyclopedic categorisation of being were practices dear to Hegel; but in contemporary thought, they are at the same time also its least inspiring practices. It is true that Hegel consistently pursued the idea that the logical concatenation of concepts coincides with the concatenation of epochs in history, an idea that bears the obvious traces of the aspirations of his time. But if we do not aim to compose a universal theory of history and logic in one strike, such an idea is at least unnecessary, if not counterproductive.

The idea that explosive plasticity is paradigmatic suggests that the plasticity of habit and the plasticity of Incarnation are fully explained by explosive plasticity, while the reverse is not true. Let me return to the context of the Deleuzian distinction between uncentred concepts and concepts as packs, and point out once more that Malabou defended Hegel as a philosopher of the pack. If plasticity is a pack of concepts, then the link that connects the plasticity of sculpture to the plasticity of kenosis and to the plasticity of the Absolute Knowledge cannot be explained by simple, schematic formulas like Art-Greeks, Religion-Germans, Philosophy-Hegel. To truly understand plasticity as a conceptual pack we must understand it as plastic also in the sense that the plasticity of sculpture is just as relevant today as it was for the Greeks, and that its spiritual context is not confined to the field of the theory of art. That is to say, that the works of plastic art and architecture address us today with the same immediacy that they have always addressed to human minds, and that they are not restricted to some field of Art that must first be mediated by Philosophy before it can intervene in the domains of religion, politics, every-day life or economy.

To conclude, we should absolutely embrace Malabou's concept of the plasticity of explosion and the ontology of the accident, demonstrated in her reading of Hegel's concept of absolute knowledge. But this plasticity should not be seen as plasticity *par excellence*, as the uncentered, ultimate plasticity. The unity that is expected in every Hegelian concept can also mean a unity of the pack, where plasticities move in unforeseeable ways and overtake one another without any logical-historical order. I hold that the true productiveness of Malabou's concept of plasticity for contemporary Hegelian thought lies precisely in the pack of what she calls productive and destructive plasticity, where one relates to the other but never reduces the other to its dialectical, sublatale counterpart.

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Gregor Moder

Hegel Katrin Malabu: Jedna ili više plastičnosti?

Rezime

Kroz originalno i izuzetno plodno čitanje Hegelove koncepcije negativnosti, Katrin Malabu je razvila pojam plastičnosti na kome uporno radi kao na jednom od svojih kardinalnih pojmova. Angažujući se na problematici jedinstva kod Hegela, tekst pokušava da odgovori na pitanje da li postoji jedna plastičnost ili postoji više plastičnosti. Autor tvrdi da se mora biti oprezan da se ne svede svojstvena višestrukost plastičnosti na jednu plastičnost koja postane plastičnost *par excellence*: plastičnost plastične eksplozije, nagle i apsolutne pauze je potrebno razlikovati od kreativne ili produktivne plastičnosti navike. Malabu tvrdi da je Hegel – suprotno od onoga što je Delez čitao u njemu – filozof konceptulnog mnoštva kao mnoštva koje se ne može svesti samo na jednu sliku, sliku jedinstva. Ako je to tačno, stoga je koncept same plastičnosti sa kojim je ona shvatila suštinu Hegelove dijalektike potrebno razumeti barem kao „jedinstvo u sukobu“, ako ne kao neorgansko, nehomogeno, sastavljeno jedinstvo – a možda čak i kao jedinstvo pakovanja.

**Ključne reči:** plastičnost, negacija, eksplozija, skulptura, kenosis

Zdravko Kobe

## True Sacrifice On Hegel's Presentation of Self-Consciousness

**Abstract** *The paper provides a modest reading of Hegel's treatment of self-consciousness in his Phenomenology of Spirit and tries to present it as an integral part of the overall project of the experience of consciousness leading from understanding to reason. Its immediate objective is, it is argued, to think the independence and dependence, that is the pure and empirical I within the same unity of self-consciousness. This implies a double movement of finding a proper existence for the pure I and at the same time a breaking down of the empirical I's attachment to particularity. It is argued that the Hegelian struggle for recognition intends to show how the access to reason demands the subject's renunciation of its attachment to particularity, that is to sacrifice not only its bare life but every thing indeed, including its particular identity, and yet, to go on living.*

**Keywords:** *Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, self-consciousness, desire, recognition, master and servant, sacrifice, departicularisation, reason*

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The chapter on self-consciousness in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* gave rise to a flood of interpretations that made it one of the most widely commented pieces in the history of modern philosophy. Its success was partly due to the famous Paris lectures of Kojève who, combining Marx and Heidegger, presented it as a core matrix of Hegel's entire thought. Developed further in a myriad of ways by writers from Sartre to Lacan, the figures of desire, recognition, and of master and servant acquired a reputation of indispensable references particularly in French thought in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The discursive frenzy hasn't stopped there, however. A series of new, typically heterodox readings has been presented in recent years by various authors – e.g. by Honneth, McDowell or Brandom, to name but a few – who once again felt the need to rely on Hegel in order to formulate their own philosophical projects. But due to such excessive diversity of interpretations the general picture arising out of it is that of a profound perplexity where, a few common places aside, the outline of Hegel's argument has become increasingly blurred. Since nearly everyone has his or her very own reading of it, it is almost impossible to tell what it “really means”.

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This is not to say that there must be but a single true analysis. In his treatment of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology* Hegel proceeds on a level of such generality that it is bound to lend itself to a vast variety of readings, none of which can be deemed entirely false. And since, at least for Hegel, the truth of an interpretation is not something written in advance, it is possible to claim that all of them may be true at the same time. An excellent example is Kojève himself: his reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a "philosophical anthropology" built around the primordial scene of the struggle for recognition is bluntly incorrect when compared to Hegel's actual argument, up to the point where one may wonder whether Kojève had the same book in mind; however, his reading has proved so productive not only in inventing new philosophical concepts but also in providing better understanding of Hegel's philosophical undertaking in general – so it must be considered true in its own right.

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On the other hand this confusion is rather strange. Hegel is basically a fair author who in no moment wanted to present himself as a person of superior intellect, especially not more clever than his readers. Anyone who bothered to read him closely is bound to notice the enormous effort he put in making himself understood. The diversity of interpretations can also be hardly explained by the inherent difficulty of the matter. To a large extent it seems to follow from very particular agendas that various interpreters wanted to read into it. The best way to proceed, then, is with self-confident naivety. If one wants to know what he really wanted to tell us in his treatment of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the first rule would be to forget that there might be other interpretations and to start afresh. This is in any case the advice given by Hegel himself who later claimed that in order to enter the philosophical discourse one simply needed to give up prejudices.

It may be true that the *Phenomenology* presents some complications in this regard, in particular due the fact that it relies on the polyphony of voices whose implicit references are nowadays often hard to identify. It is also true that in the very composition of the *Phenomenology* Hegel might have modified his initial plan, so that the final result may lack complete coherence. Yet in spite of that we will try to show that it is possible to provide a modest and still rather convincing presentation of Hegel's treatment of self-consciousness in his *Phenomenology*. Its main objective is, we would argue, to think the independence and dependence, the pure and empirical I within the same unity of self-consciousness. This implies a double movement of finding a proper existence for self-consciousness

and of breaking the consciousness's attachment to the particular. Above all, we are going to argue that the struggle for recognition is intended to exemplify how the access to universality of thought can be gained only by renouncing one's attachment to one's particularity, by scarifying not only one's life but as a matter of fact every-thing – *and still* to go on living.

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Before we start, however, let us make two simple observations. First, if we want to produce an immanent reading of a particular shape of natural consciousness in *Phenomenology of Spirit* we have to keep in mind the general nature of Hegel's project. His purpose was to provide a scientific introduction to science, to develop a subjectively valid justification of knowledge that would enable everyone to rise to the standpoint of science. For a variety of reasons this justification was conceived as a concatenation of the "experiences of consciousness" relying on our inherent pretension to know: every particular shape of natural consciousness is by its very nature engaged in verifying the coherence of its conception of truth (to "test the reality of its knowing" against its "own criteria"), and when found inconsistent or deficient, as it inevitably is, knowledge thus obtained is meant to transform by itself into a new shape. Anyhow, the important thing is that every shape is characterized by the same pretension-to-know, which acquires a more and more complex inner structure; and that every new shape comes into existence as a positive result of the failure of the old one (this is what "experience of consciousness" actually means: a lesson learned). As for the shape in question this means that in our reading of self-consciousness we have to be able to understand it as a prolongation of understanding leading further to reason.

And second, since the *Phenomenology* is designed to be a series of experiences of consciousness under the close supervision of the philosopher Hegel, we have to take into account the simultaneous presence of different standpoints and discourses. It is not only that sometimes we, the readers and would-be-philosophers, are able to see something that cannot be seen by consciousness itself. More importantly, we have to distinguish with great care between the developments and comments that are made from the standpoint of science and their transpositions to the level of concrete experiences; between what belongs to the setting of the conceptual stage of experience and what belongs to the experience proper. It is to his own credit that Hegel was extremely diligent in demarcating the lines separating the two discursive levels. Usually he starts by describing

the conceptual structure of the new shape of consciousness, especially with regard to its object. It is only then that he proceeds to experience proper, whereby he almost never fails to instruct his reader in the most explicit terms about what is going to happen *now*, e.g. by using the phrase “in its experience which we are now to consider” (§173).<sup>1</sup> The awareness that there are two basically different levels in Hegel’s discursive strategy can spare us some pointless self-made riddle.

But let us now proceed to the thing itself.

The emergence of self-consciousness marks one of the major turning points in the progress of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. At the end of the previous episode, natural consciousness in the shape of understanding tried to explain the pure diversity that remained the last distinction still opposing it to its object. The distinction finally collapsed in the moment it realized that this pure, groundless diversity structurally coincided with the movement of tautological explanation, differentiating what is the same and making the same what is different. Both are but one “making a difference that is no difference”. Consciousness has come to see that, in explaining, “while it seems to be pursuing something else”, it really is “in an immediate conversation with itself, enjoying only itself” (§163). The curtain separating it from the then unknowable is lifted. For the first time the duality of consciousness and its object is overcome and something unprecedented has emerged, namely, “a certainty, that is the same as its truth” (§166). Using the strongest possible words Hegel declares that “with the self-consciousness we have now entered into the native realm of truth” (§167).

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We know, of course, that in Hegel every beginning is always abstract and that the jubilation is soon going to be spoiled. What exactly is lacking? The problem is, according to Hegel, that the self-consciousness is initially, that is as it “first makes its appearance” (§167), nothing but pure self-identity of “I am I”. Yet as it is with Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception, or even more so with Fichte’s pure I of “Thathandlung” (the I that is “the content of the relation and the relating itself” [§166]), the pure form of “I-ness” existentially depends on the content *given* from outside. It exists only as the movement of “the return from the *otherness*” (§167). Thus, when natural consciousness managed to reduce every determined other to the unity of self-consciousness, it inadvertently

1 The quotations from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* are, for the sake of convenience, given using the paragraph numbers only. We used a combination of Miller’s (Hegel 1977) and Pinkard’s (Hegel, internet) translations that were occasionally altered without any specific notice.

withdrew the very ground it was standing on. "It thus seems that only the principal moment itself has disappeared, namely, simple *independent existence* for self-consciousness" (§167). And since there is now no such independent other, self-consciousness does not have any existence either: "It is not self-consciousness" (§167).

In Hegel the problem is formulated in terms of the unity of self-consciousness and consciousness. Since self-consciousness actually depends on the given otherness, it always includes the moment of consciousness, and "the whole breadth of the sensuous world is preserved for it" (§167). It is, to speak with Kant, an "I think a manifold of representations". The manifold content is on the other hand grounded in the "I think". What has come to be is therefore the opposition between the consciousness and the self-consciousness, or between the empirical and the pure self-consciousness, which, however, has only "the unity of the self-consciousness with itself" for its true essence. Hegel famously adds:

This unity must become essential to self-consciousness, which is to say, self-consciousness is *desire* in general. (§167)

As we see, "*Begierde überhaupt*" in its original meaning is simply a manifestation of an inner incongruity between the two moments of self-consciousness, which accordingly generates a striving for its abolishment.<sup>2</sup> Desire has nothing to do with the animal or the vital, nor is it inherently destructive. On the contrary, it is a desire to make the moment of consciousness *equal* to the moment of self-consciousness. If self-consciousness can be said to desire something *it desires only itself*: it is a desire to *be* self-consciousness, to gain a durable *existence*. The desire the self-consciousness is, is the desire to be self-consciousness.

The situation of self-consciousness is thus best described by Fichte's exposition of the pure I. It too is depended on not-I in order to be something or to exist. No I without a not-I. But since they are in a direct contradiction, the immediate result is the state of utter instability where both I and not-I at the same time presuppose and sublate each other. In a sense, the entire edifice of the *Science of Knowledge* can be described as an enormous endeavour to think this contradiction, to allow the self-consciousness to form a stable relation to the world of objects. According to Hegel, Fichte never really managed to offer a satisfactory solution to

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<sup>2</sup> It may be in that respect more appropriate to speak of *appetition* instead of *desire*. This would be in any case closer to the German meaning and its conceptual affiliation to *Begehrungsvermögen* and *vis appetitiva*.

the contradiction in question.<sup>3</sup> Not even turning towards the practical attitude substantially changed the outcome: for while it allowed him to ground the infinite impulse in the I's own activity, the absolute demand that I have to become equal to myself finally ended in what, for Hegel, was a *failure of the infinite progress*. It is therefore an irony that Hegel, as we are going to see, intended to solve Fichte's problem by essentially Fichtean means.<sup>4</sup>

Anyhow, confronted with the inequality of its two sides, self-consciousness exhibits itself "as the movement in which this opposition is sublated, and the equality of itself with itself becomes explicit for it" (§167).<sup>5</sup> The I desiring to be itself sublates the otherness of the other, giving itself objective certainty of itself. This negative other, the object of the I's activity, is according to Hegel inwardly structured as *life* and is therefore *in itself* a living being. At this point he introduces an extensive digression on the notion of life that used to be one of his key concepts before the Jena period. Its inclusion can be further justified on the ground that it is connected to the phenomena of desiring and of taking the ultimate risk. Yet properly speaking life is not a main subject. It enters the scene only to the extent that the object of every shape of natural consciousness is always a kind of sedimentation of its subjective movement: the object proper to self-consciousness is something that is self-conscious "in itself", a self-consciousness that does not know itself. This is, as it were, life. But otherwise life does not play a significant role, not even within experience. The object's independency is merely an expression of the fact that

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3 See Hegel (2010: 30): "Critical philosophy ... gave to the logical determinations an essentially subjective significance out of fear of the object; ... for that reason, these determinations remained affected by the very object that they avoided, and were left with the remains of a thing-in-itself, an infinite obstacle, as a beyond." – The passage can already be found in the first edition from 1812.

4 One has to notice that the entire treatment of self-consciousness in *Phenomenology of Spirit* is animated by a Fichtean spirit and often even by Fichte's letters. See Fichte (1982: 233): "The absolute self is absolutely identical with itself: everything therein is one and the same self, and belongs ... to one and the same self; nothing therein is distinguishable, nothing manifold; the self is everything and nothing, since it is nothing *for itself*, and can distinguish no positing or posited within itself. – In virtue of its nature it *strives* (which again can only be said figuratively in regard to a future connection) to maintain itself in this condition."

5 We could imagine it as a purportedly sovereign subject wanting to assess itself as the centre of its world, that is, of the entire world. See in this sense Neuhouser (2009: 39): "This wanting to be completely sovereign with respect to one's own will and belief constitutes for Hegel the defining aim of a self-conscious subject." – The original reference might be Fichte's early characterisation of *freedom*, see Fichte (1971: 88–89): "Trough supreme implementation of these two rights of the conqueror over the sensuality he would now be *free*, i.e. dependent solely on himself, on his pure I. To every: *I will* in his breast should correspond a: *There it is* in the world of appearances."

independent self-consciousness is itself dependent on consciousness – and therein not only the living being but “the whole breadth of the sensuous world is preserved”.

Besides, we have too keep in mind that Hegel's present characterisation of self-consciousness is still so general that it pertains to a level that is even ahead of the split into the theoretical and the practical. It can therefore be equally successful applied to knowing and doing, to knowing as doing. The same can be observed regarding the movement of desire: At least according to a certain common conception of knowledge – once brilliantly called “alimentary philosophy” by Sartre<sup>6</sup> – both eating and comprehending can be understood within the same model of assimilation.

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It is only after presenting the conceptual outline of the situation that Hegel descends to the standpoint of natural consciousness and its rather simple *experience* “which we are now to consider” (§173). The self-consciousness' striving to be itself, to make its two moments equal, takes the form of a self-conscious being driven to erase the independence of its object. It now *appears as* “desire” (§174), this time understood in its usual meaning that, perhaps, may be rendered as appetite. “Certain of the nullity of this other, it posits for *itself* this nullity as its truth, it destroys the self-sufficient object, and it gives itself the certainty of itself as *true* certainty, as such which for it has become to be in an *objective manner*” (§174). The self-conscious subject makes its object equal to itself by devouring it. Yet it is precisely in the satisfaction of desire that it gets subverted. The object satisfying the desire has ceased to exist, satisfaction is frustrated, and desire reappears. In short, this mode of satisfying desire only introduces the infinite cycle of the ever-unsatisfied desire. And as always in Hegel, the progress in the infinite brings with it a lesson: by the endless cycle of recurring hunger that no amount of eating can satiate, self-consciousness becomes aware in the most concrete way possible that *it is dependent* on something other. “It is in fact something other than the self-consciousness that is the essence of desire; and it is through this experience that this truth comes to be for the self-consciousness itself.” (§175)

There is no need to ask here what makes the other “independent” or “self-sufficient”. It may be that as an instantiation of life the other bears a form of infinity, giving it the capacity of ever lasting regeneration. But this is not the point. The point is that self-consciousness depends on the

6 See Sartre (1970: 4): “What is a table, a rock, a house? A certain assemblage of ‘contents of consciousnesses’, a class of such contents. O digestive philosophy!”

existence of an independent other. Being a negative relation to itself, it only *is* as the movement of returning to itself by sublating the other. "For this act of sublating even to be, there must be this other." (§175) This is why the object of desire proves to be indestructible. The experience of the ever-spoiled satisfaction only makes it evident how self-consciousness is in a contradictory relation to the world of objects. It further renders manifest that a true satisfaction can *never* be attained in this *immediate* way, by relating to an other that exists in the mode of *things*. A thing can either be or not be; it can be *either* independent or dependent, either affirmed or negated, but it *cannot be both* at the same time: something will therefore always be missing for effective satisfaction. Finally, the experience makes it clear that the self-consciousness' contradictory desire can only be satisfied by an other that could be both at the same time, that is, that would be affirmed *and* negated, *affirmed precisely by being negated*. The other must itself have the form of a negative relation to itself: It must be self-consciousness.

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*Self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness. (§175)*

The introduction of *another* self-consciousness may cause some wonder since up to now all the shapes of natural consciousness were solitary. In effect, this underlines the importance of the present development. It can be shown nonetheless to follow rather consistently from the self-consciousness' desire to *be* itself, to make both sides of its unity *equal*. Its inner structure proved to be such that it cannot exist in the realm of objects alone. "A *self-consciousness* exists *for a self-consciousness*. Only thereby does self-consciousness in fact exist." (§177) What Hegel called the "duplication of self-consciousness" (§176) merely explicates the inner conditions of the possibility of existence of self-consciousness and can to this extent be said to be deduced directly out of its concept. Self-consciousness is *essentially a plural concept*; it can exist only as *one of the many* (i.e. at least two, for now), as an I that is we.

But on the other hand this does not imply that the two I's the self-consciousness is immanently split into somehow represent the two sides of the unity of self-consciousness, e.g. in the form of the couple of pure I and empirical self. Both are in effect fully-fledged, structurally identical self-consciousnesses in their own right.<sup>7</sup> The reduplication is a testimony of

<sup>7</sup> This is against McDowell's "heterodox" reading proposed in McDowell 2007. Although McDowell is justified in stressing that the reduplication arises immanently, from the contradictory demands involved in the very concept of self-consciousness, it is Hegel's

the impossibility for the self-conscious subject to establish a stable relation to its object in this direct way, be it in a theoretical or practical attitude, since both of them remain enclosed within the same digestive model. To form a durable relation to the object the self-conscious subject has to *relate to another subject*.

It is interesting to note that it was Fichte who first formulated a similar proposal. He tried to solve the problem of circularity that is involved in self-consciousness by suggesting that it can become aware of its free activity only by an "incentive" or "challenge" coming from another self-consciousness. A self-conscious subject thus presupposes itself in the form of the other self-conscious subject.<sup>8</sup> But whereas Fichte used the argument to establish universal validity of the rules of right for all self-conscious subjects, Hegel made it constitutive of the *transcendental structure of subjectivity* itself. And if Fichte wanted to account for the infinite check of the thing in itself by introducing a practical attitude, Hegel transferred the problem into the realm of intersubjectivity<sup>9</sup> that offers incomparably richer and more flexible conceptual tools to solve it.

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## II

Previous experience of consciousness has led to its reduplication. While in the first, immediate attempt self-consciousness tried to establish equality of its two sides by simply erasing the independence of the consciousness, now, after the lesson learned, it wants to make them equal in the inverse way, by raising consciousness to the level of self-consciousness. "Self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness." (§175)

As usual the exposition starts by delineating a *conceptual portrait* of the new shape of consciousness where there are now two self-consciousnesses

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contention that this transcendental problem can be solved only within a *plurality* of self-conscious subjects, ultimately within what Hegel called spirit. In this sense, spirit is a transcendental concept.

8 Hegel's presentation bears striking similarities to Fichte's argumentation in *Foundations of Natural Right*, especially in § 3 where Fichte tries to prove the following theorem (Fichte 2000: 29): "The finite rational being cannot ascribe to itself a free efficacy in the sensible world without also ascribing such efficacy to others, and thus without also presupposing the existence of other finite rational beings outside itself." The final result of the task "to show how self-consciousness is possible" famously reads (Fichte 2000: 36): "The human being (like all finite beings in general) becomes human being only among human beings ... *if there are to be human beings at all, there must be more than one.*"

9 According to Breazeale this structural move from object to intersubjectivity was already made by Fichte replacing the problem of *Anstoß* with that of *Aufforderung*; see Breazeale 1995: 97, and Žižek 2012: 149.



facing each other. The relation of desire has been transformed into what Hegel – once again after Fichte<sup>10</sup> – calls *recognition*: “Self-consciousness exists only in being recognized.” (§178) The fact that what used to be the object of desire has now become the self-conscious subject in its own merit, and in addition, that this other has become an integral part of the unity of the first, renders the situations infinitely complex indeed. In a rare move, Hegel explicitly calls for caution: the concept under consideration is that of “a multi-sided and multi-meaning intertwining, such that, on the one hand, its moments must be strictly kept apart from each other, and on the other hand, they must at the same time also be taken and known as not distinct” (§178).

The following, extremely dense paragraphs are consequently devoted to the concept of *recognition*. Since its movement is too complex to be properly assessed here, two simple observations should suffice. First, because the two self-consciousnesses are ontologically *indistinguishable*, including *for themselves*, the “sublating” relation to the other is not only negation of the other but at the same time negation of oneself and affirmation of the other as other, or as Hegel puts it in great precision, a “letting the other go free” (§181).<sup>11</sup> And second, the movement of recognition of the two self-consciousnesses commands a relation of multilayered reciprocity, consisting in what may be called *specularity* (What does the one, the other does at the same time), *ambidirectionality* (What does the one against itself, it does against the other at the same time), and *ambioriginality* (What does the one against the other, the other does against itself). It is especially this second point demanding absolute reciprocity that Hegel summarized by using a succinct formula: “They *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* each other.” (§184)

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But once again we must not precipitate the development: no recognition has been established and no experience has taken place yet. In the preceding considerations Hegel the philosopher simply analysed the concept of recognition, delineating the list of necessary conditions that have to be met in order that a successful recognition could happen. It is only “now” (§185) that we proceed to the level of experience. The concrete shape the natural consciousness takes “at first” is that of two

10 For an excellent presentation of Fichte–Hegel connection in respect with recognition, see Fischbach 1999.

11 On Hegel's uses of this strategic concept of *Entlassung*, see the chapter “Wahrheit als Entlassung. Gleichgültigkeit, die übersehene Revolution Hegels” in Simoniti 2014: 67–78. – For alternative view, combining *Entlassung* with sacrifice, see Frank Ruda in the anonymous Acheronta Movebo 2014.

self-conscious individuals which immediately “exist for themselves in the way ordinary objects do”, as “*independent* shapes absorbed in the *being of life*” (§186). The “enlivenment” of self-conscious subject takes place as a direct reflection of the object’s subjectivation: since the object of desire acquired the form of life and since there is now no ontological difference between the I and its object, the subject is a living being, too. Both self-conscious subjects are furthermore animated by the same striving to present their independence, i.e. to sublate or annihilate the purportedly independent other. But whereas in the shape of desire the aim of the self-consciousness was, so to speak, to manifest its independence *to itself*, now it has to prove it *to the other*, in order to be *recognized as independent* by the independent other. And since in the present shape “the whole breath” of the objective world happens to include the self-conscious subject as a living thing, its readiness to sublate the entire realm of things ultimately involves its own life.

The *presentation* of itself as the pure abstraction of self-consciousness consists in showing itself as the pure negation of its objective mode, or in showing that it is not attached to any specific *determinate being*, not at all bound to the universal individuality of determinate being, that it is not attached to life. (§187)

Self-consciousness is supposed to manifest its independence to the other by displaying its readiness to give its life. This can, however, be done only by actually risking and eventually giving it. The self-conscious subject is consequently *driven to live dangerously*, to look for a situation where its life is exposed to the risk of dying, or to put it in radical terms, to actively search for death. It is its own death it is after, not so much the death of the other – the other being, as it were, a mere instrument of its suicide.<sup>12</sup> In effect, the essentially self-destructive drive manifests itself in an outward aggressiveness against the other only because the doing of the one must simultaneously be the doing of the other. Although there definitely are some connections – the movement of recognition is but a prolongation of desire – the struggle for life and death can therefore hardly be read in the Hobbesian terms. It is not so much about possession or domination, and it is not provoked by any previous infringement.<sup>13</sup> It rather follows

12 See Hegel (1987: 203): “To the being-for-itself as consciousness it appears this that it is after the *death* of an other, but it is after its own, a suicide – in exposing himself to *danger*.”

13 This is an important structural difference sharply distinguishing Hegel’s treatment of the struggle for life and death in earlier Jena fragments from the one in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the Jena presentations the struggle for recognition typically resulted out of an inevitable conflict of possessive drives and was typically resolved

out of the immanent need to prove to the other that “for self-consciousness, the essence is not *being*, not the *immediate* way it appears in, not its immersion into the expanse of life” (§187). The fight is fought in order to be recognized as “pure *being-for-itself*” (§187).

So, the two self-conscious living beings engage in a life and death struggle. We can figure them as two fearless, proud subjects clashing against each other in the attempt to elicit the other's recognition, and showing an equal determined will, they continue fighting to the end until one or, characteristically, both of them die. In this they have effectively established the certainty they were struggling for – yet, as Hegel goes on to remark, “this is not the case for those who passed the test in this struggle” (§188). They cannot bear witness of their independence for they are no more. The first result is therefore that, on the one hand, there are dead fighters who proved their absolute freedom (“negation without self-standing”) and some bystanders, on the other, who may effectively recognize the dead fighters but are not recognized themselves (“self-standing without absolute negativity”). In any case there is no *mutual* recognition. The situation is in that respect structurally identical to the one of the desire where the object had to be both affirmed and negated in the same time, both to be and not to be. And just as the ensuing infinite progress made desire finally realize that it was something other that was the essence of self-consciousness; in the same way the piling up of dead corpses – useless, as it is, since failing to produce recognition – makes the spectators comprehend that *life is essential* to self-consciousness.

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In this experience self-consciousness learns that life is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness. (§189)

This is crucial. According to Hegel, the struggle for death does *not* lead directly to the shape of master and servant. At first, the immediate self-consciousness rather sticks *exclusively* to its “pure being-for-itself”, and since to that effect it *has nothing to lose*, it can experience *no fear* and can only persist in fighting. Only the dull counting of futile deaths makes the survivors understand that *there is more* in self-consciousness. “The

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by introducing an institution of a higher order. If in the Jena fragments the entire landscape has an unmistakably Hobbesian touch, basically providing an alternative version of the *origin of the state*, in *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel gives it a pronounced Fichtean turn and builds it into the transcendental structure of subjectivity. Interpretations that mainly rely on the Jena fragments, for instance Honneth 1994, may therefore very well prove to be interesting in their own right, but they can hardly serve as a guiding line for understanding Hegel's treatment of recognition in *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

dissolution of that simple unity is the result of the first experience.” (§189) It has now become aware that “both moments are essential” (§189). To be (recognized), both pure being-for-itself *and* life, both independence *and* dependence have to be thought in unity. And only after the acknowledgment of this lesson, the life and dead struggle can be engaged *again* – now leading to a *different* outcome where the simple-minded self-consciousness may still be ready to persist indefinitely while the other, informed by previous experience, *recedes* and accepts the subordinate standing of an object. “The former is the *master*, the latter is the *servant*.” (§189)

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Taking into account the abstract level of Hegel's treatment, concrete historical references are here evidently out of place.<sup>14</sup> Hegel has no intention to describe any conjectural stage in the development of human history, and although it may be said, as Hyppolite did, that in the subsequent master/servant dialectic the servant is revealed to be the master of the master, it is hardly adequate to read this development as a part of the emancipatory narrative.<sup>15</sup> What counts for Hegel is the *relation of*

14 There have been recurring attempts to locate the scene of master and servant historically, i.e. to read it, mainly, as a depiction of prehistoric slavery or else of feudal bondage. To our knowledge, the argument for slavery was best presented in Ottmann 1981, while a strong case for mediaeval bondage was recently made in Cole 2004 and again in Cole 2014. It was already emphasized that according to our understanding Hegel wanted to present the general relation of domination and subordination, and that it is misplaced to search for a determinate historical reference. Yet, if obliged to choose, we would strongly opt for slavery. A proper justification would require special examination, so let us make just two factual observations. First, contrary to the first impression, the use of *Knecht* and *Knechtschaft* does not warrant any specific conclusion to mediaeval age. According to the monumental Grimm German dictionary *Knecht* and *Knechtschaft* were in fact fairly common words for slave and slavery. The Luther Bible does not use *Sklave* at all, and all instances that – beyond any doubt – refer to slave are consistently rendered by *Knecht* in Luther's translation. Hegel himself did not use the word *Sklave* at any point in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. As for KNECHTSCHAFT, the Grimm dictionary reads: “*eigentlich*: in die knechtschaft führen, verkaufen, das joch der knechtschaft tragen, *doch ist auch hier das gelehrtete sclaverei jetzt* [i.e. around 1860] *entschieden vorherrschend*” (emphasis added). If Grimm can be relied upon, *Sklaverei* is basically a more specific and more modern word for *Knechtschaft*. This seems to be consistent with Hegel's use of the expressions as well, both synchronically and diachronically. And second, if we bothered to ask Hegel what *he* thinks the proper historical references are we would soon find out that in several places he is quite explicit in associating his treatment of master and servant to slavery. See for instance the remark to § 57 in *Philosophy of Right*, or the addition to § 349 in the first edition of *Encyclopaedia*, or finally the following addition to § 432 (Hegel 1978: 59): “In order to avoid eventual misunderstandings of the point of view just presented [i.e. the mastery and servitude], it also has to be observed that the struggle for recognition in the extreme form in which it is here presented can occur only in the *state of nature*.”

15 For a convincing formulation, see Gadamer 1973: 231.

*domination* between two self-conscious subjects, the manner it is exemplified in each of them, and the consequences their inequality has for knowing.<sup>16</sup> For this reason the relation in question is examined in *two distinct runs*, first from the standpoint of master and then from the standpoint of servant.

The *master* seems to believe that in her person the problem of self-consciousness has been resolved, that she is not only “the concept” of being-for-itself, but exists for herself as “mediated through another consciousness” (§190). She has seemingly established a stable relation to both the thing and the other self-consciousness. Having proved to be “self-standing”, she rules over the servant; for according to her it is the latter’s attachment to being that holds her in bondage: “it is the chain which the servant could not break free from in the struggle” (§190). At the same time she apparently succeeded where the desire inevitably failed; for by putting the servant between herself and the thing, it is the servant who now confronts the independent side of the thing, leaving to her the dependent side solely: the servant “merely *works on it*” while the master gets “the *enjoyment of it*” (§190).

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We have to remind ourselves, however, that this is the *master’s interpretation* of the situation (“We only saw what servitude is in relation to mastery”, §194). Hegel goes on to rapidly expose it as a self-indulging, stultifying fantasy. For first, while the concept of recognition demands reciprocal equality, master is recognized by the servant only, that is by someone she does not recognize herself. “As a result the recognition that has arisen is one-sided and unequal” (§191) – which is to say, it is *no recognition*. And second, since the other consciousness is the place where the first one obtains its objective existence, or its truth, it follows that by denigrating the servant it is itself that it has inflicted the damage to. “The *truth* of the independent consciousness is accordingly the servile consciousness of the servant.” (§193)<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the master undergoes no further development: she learns nothing, makes no experience and does not transform into a new shape. In short, and this is truly remarkable, master remains a dead end in the progress of the *Phenomenology*.<sup>18</sup>

16 For that reason we prefer to use the master/servant couple instead of the once usual master/slave or lord/bondsman.

17 The obvious reference is again Fichte, see Fichte (1867: 33): “Rousseau says: A man often considers himself the lord of others, who is yet more a slave than they. He might with still greater justice have said: He who considers himself the lord of others is himself a slave.”

18 Kojève is right to speak of an “existential impasse” with regard to the master.

What about the *servant*? Hegel warns us in advance that her situation, too, is going to turn into opposite of what it immediately is. However, in order to understand how, and why, we have to show extreme caution about what exactly made her into servant in the first place. According to a common reading the (future) servant proved to be too attached to being and thus incapable to insist in struggle all the way down: servant is the one who, contrary to master, at a point gave up, ceded on her desire. Yet this is, not to forget, *the master's interpretation of the servant's situation!* As for the servant, there might be *something else* that happened in the struggle. Facing death, this absolute master, the self-conscious subject evidently felt fear for its whole existence. According to Hegel, however, in this experience it took *a certain positive lesson* as well.

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In this experience it had inwardly fallen into dissolution, trembled in its depths, and all that was fixed within it has been shaken loose. However, this pure universal movement, this absolute liquefying of everything stable, is the simple essence of self-consciousness, absolute negativity, *pure being-for-itself*, which thereby is in this consciousness. (§195)

The total inner dissolution provoked by the feeling of ultimate fear made it *experience the essence of self-consciousness*; it made it realize that in its *absolute negativity* there is nothing that would be fixed and stable, *nothing that would exist in the way of things*. To be self-consciousness accordingly means *not* to be attached to *anything* pertaining to the realm of determinate being. It is only on the *positive* ground of *this* lesson that the self-conscious subject, *already aware* of equal essentiality of life, was now able to make this further, *truly heroic act* of freely giving up the struggle, and even though, having thus lost its freedom, there are now no causes making life worth living left, to go on living! In this gesture – a true stroke of genius invented by Schiller<sup>19</sup> – wherein self-consciousness is ready to give up its sovereignty, not out of fear or weakness that is unable to resist the physically mightier opponent, but as an expression of its own

19 In the short "On the Sublime" there is a paradox uncannily similar to the situation under consideration. On the one hand man is a *being which wills*; as essentially free, in everything he does he asserts his own will. On the other hand, the power of nature is such that there inevitably are some things *which he merely must and does not will*, ultimately to die. On how Schiller, brilliantly, solved this paradox, see Schiller (internet): "He ought, however, to be Man without exceptions, therefore, in no case suffer something *against* his will. Can he therefore no longer oppose to the physical forces a proportional physical force, so nothing else remains left to him, in order to suffer no violence, than: *to annul altogether a relation*, which is so disadvantageous to him and *to annihilate as a concept* the violence, which he must in fact suffer. To annihilate violence as a concept, however, is called nothing other, than to voluntarily subject oneself to the same. The culture, which makes him apt thereto, is called the moral."

considered free will, there is finally the situation where independence and dependence, affirmation and negation coincide.

Reading in this light the relative position of master and servant assume somewhat unfamiliar traits: it is the master who turns out to be the one who has never cut off her attachment to some "specific determinate being" (§187). Master is of course prepared to sacrifice herself for the things she stands for. She would rather die than live without what makes her *identity*, or to put it simply, without her *honour*.<sup>20</sup> Since dishonoured life is less than nothing to her, she is willing to give everything for it, including her life. However, this very formula reveals that there is *something* she is *not prepared to sacrifice*, and this is precisely her *particular identity*, her *honour*. To paraphrase Proctor, she is willing to sell her soul, but in no case would she give up her name. There is therefore still something in her that exists in the mode of *things*, something fixed and stable, "some particular determinate being ... reserved for herself" (§505). For her it is not hard to die for it, it is hard to live without it.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, a *true sacrifice* consists in giving up actually *everything*, including this particular thing, one's honour, or name, and *nonetheless* living on.

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The true sacrifice of being-for-itself is thus solely that in which it surrenders itself as completely as in death, yet in this renunciation it no less preserves itself. (§506)

According to Hegel it is the realm of the universal, the freedom of thought that such true sacrifice leads to. This is why he finds it convenient at this moment to quote from the Bible: "The fear of the Lord is indeed the beginning of wisdom." (§195) For in order to enter the realm of the universal one has to give up special attachment to any particular content, to renounce the privilege of claiming, for instance, that a proposition is true simply because I would like it so very much to be true. In fact, in order to think one has to take the order of universal reason to be one's own particular order, and consequently, to abandon any particular

20 Brandom reads the entire development of self-consciousness in terms of the constitution of personal identity; see Brandom (2011: 28): "The answer we are given in *Self-Consciousness* is that one identifies with what one is willing to *risk* and *sacrifice* for." If for Brandom the basic question is about how one *becomes* this particular subject one is, for us it is, exactly the opposite, about how one *loses* one's attachment to one's particular identity and becomes a universal subject.

21 It is interesting to note how poets and thinkers filled entire books with lines professed from the standpoint of the master. Its motto – "To die a prince – or live a slave –/ Thy choice is most ignoble brave!" – incidentally by Byron, has been formulated time and again, including by Prešeren. Only Brecht, Hegelian enough to know what true sacrifice is, was able to speak for servant as he, for instance in *The Decision*, formulated the lines often quoted by Žižek.

opinion, no matter how much cherished, when the order of the universal passes a verdict against it. In this sense, only the servant of the universal can be said to think.<sup>22</sup> The master on the other hand was not prepared to make such sacrifice. She remained stubborn, chained to the particular content that she fancied to be hers. "Since the entire contents of her natural consciousness have not been shaken to the core, she is still attached *in herself* to determinate being; her having mind of her own is merely *stubbornness*, a freedom that remains bogged down within the bonds of servitude." (§196) Master can have opinions, even "interesting ideas", but think she cannot.<sup>23</sup>

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True, at this point Hegel introduced the theme of *labour* which, as "desire held in check", is able to stave off the vanishing object and transform it into something permanent. It is "trough labour" that the "servile consciousness" manages to "objectify itself", comes to see "the independent being as *its own self*" and finally "comes to itself" (§195). These and similar formulations have, hardly surprising, provided some support to the attempts to read the master/servant relation in terms of a historic tale of the labour's emancipation. It is impossible to deny that for Hegel formative labour has a pronounced liberating aspect. However, if it is formative, it is more so of its subject than of its object. Its primary function is rather to exemplify the reality check, i.e. the physical pain, self-restraint and perseverance that is in general characteristic of labour, but is equally needed for thinking.<sup>24</sup> As there is a "digestive philosophy" describing cognitive process in terms of desire, there is a kind of "manual philosophy" describing it in terms of labour. Accordingly Hegel does not speak so much about the concept of labour, but rather about the labour of concept,

22 Honneth came close to our position when in his reading of the master/servant relation he stressed the parallel to "Kant's definition of 'respect' (*Achtung*)" in which Kant sees "a demolition (*Abbruch*) or negation of self-love"; see Honnet 2008: 88. However, whereas for Honneth this "demolition of self-love" reveals the presence of the moral topics, we read it in relation to the universality of reason. According to Kant, it is the universal law of reason that commands a total surrender to its jurisdiction, regardless of what the particular intentions and inclinations of the subject might be. What causes the subject's pain (*Demütigung*) is precisely the fact that he has to forsake what is particular to him.

23 In this light, the most appropriate reference for master and servant could well turn to be Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste et son maître*. Hegel knew the novel: he commented on it in *Who thinks abstractly?* that was written in about the same time as the *Phenomenology*.

24 On this ground the "Arbeit" was often rendered as "labour" instead of the usual "work". – The formative aspect of the servant's labour which grinds off her stubbornness and helps her to reach the realm of thought was, in a slightly different context, underlined in Pippin 2011b: 83–94.



about thinking as labour. Even the emancipation of the servant that seems to happen in manual labour could be understood in terms of the effort of thought. "Through this rediscovery of itself by itself the servile consciousness acquires *a mind of its own*, and it does it precisely in the labour wherein it seemed to be merely *foreign mind*." (§196) It is only by thinking the thoughts of others that one learns to think thoughts of one's own.

In any case, the final result of the master/servant relation is a new shape of consciousness that we may call *thinker*. In order to formulate this new shape nothing else is needed but to "take together what is already there". In the formative activity of labour the servile consciousness becomes an object to itself, and in the figure of master it becomes the pure I. As soon as the two moments are put together, "a new shape of self-consciousness comes to be", the consciousness "which *thinks*". "For *to think* does not mean to be an *abstract* I, but an I which at the same time has the significance of being-*in-itself*" (§197).

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The servant has learned to think.

### III

At his point we could jump to the conclusion that the empirical and pure I, the particular and universal consciousness have become one, and proceed immediately to reason. In fact, this is exactly what Hegel did in the abridged *Encyclopaedia* exposition.<sup>25</sup> Here, however, he felt he had to go in greater detail and give a separate presentation of the *realization* of true sacrifice.

So, the servant has now become a thinker, a philosopher even. "Whether on the throne or in fetters" (§198) he now claims to be free from all dependencies of the individual existence for he can always withdraw into the realm of thought. "In thinking I am free." (§197) Yet it is this very disconnection between what I think and my individual existence that

25 The presentation of self-consciousness in the *Encyclopaedia* is understandably much more schematic. Not only are there entire episodes missing, but even the details of the argument are often simplified or adapted. For instance, in the *Encyclopaedia* version it is very hard to claim that the servant gave up its independence out of sacrifice. Therefore, whereas in the *Phenomenology* the actual serving is presented as a realization of the position already achieved, in the *Encyclopaedia* it is the very service that makes the servant lose its attachment to the particular. But the details aside, the condensed *Encyclopaedia* presentation remains structurally identical to the original one and is in agreement with our interpretation. See e.g. § 435 (§ 357 in the original edition) of the *Encyclopaedia* (Hegel 1978: 67): "The servant, on the contrary, works off the singularity and egoism of its will in the service of the master, sublates the inner immediacy of desire, and in this privation and fear of the Lord makes, – and it is the beginning of wisdom, – the transition to *universal self-consciousness*."

affects and invalidates what I think. Or put differently, the self-consciousness has given up its independent particular existence and consented to serve the master; but in doing so it may have still retained something for itself, its so-called inner independence. This was precisely the idea of stoicism, whose freedom not only turned out to be imaginary but, more importantly, whose *thinking* has thereby been exempted of the process of departicularisation. The next step consists accordingly in *realizing* the true sacrifice, in drawing its consequences, in making the thinker actually lead a dependent life, including in the realm that really counts, in thinking. After it has given up the independence of existence it has now to confirm it by giving up the independence of thought – in the sense of having not only to do or say what the other says, but to do and say it *sincerely*, with *inner* conviction, i.e. to *think* what the other says.

848 For Hegel it is the great achievement of Christian attitude in its characteristic *catholic* mode to *realize* this kind of *total surrender* of one's particular self. For it commands the believer to give up his "own decision" of what to believe by consenting to dogmas; to renounce the "property and enjoyment" by paying the tithe and tormenting the body; and finally, to "*positively* engage in doing something incomprehensible" by worshipping his God in Latin, a language he does not understand. In this way the catholic rule achieved something remarkable indeed, namely to make the self-conscious self give away what constitutes its utmost inner freedom. In short, it succeeded to make self make itself selfless.

It has the certainty of having truly divested itself if its *I*, and of having made its immediate self-consciousness into a *thing*, into an objective being. – Only through this *actual* sacrifice could it confirm this self-renunciation; for only therein does the *deception* vanish which lies in the *inner* recognition. (§229)

Now that there is nothing left in the individual that would pertain to it *in particular* – Hegel emphasizes that "the individual has renounced to itself" (§231) and "surrendered *its* will as an *individual* will" (§230) – "its will" has "*for itself* become the universal will" (§230). This particular self-consciousness has hereby become universal reason.

This is of course not the end of the story. If, now, both sides of the unity of self-consciousness may indeed have become equal, the self-conscious subject has yet to find an existence that would be at the level of its concept. We have to remind ourselves that still no recognition has taken place, at least not according to the official formula "they recognize themselves as mutually recognizing each other". In fact, it is only at the end of the section

on conscience, after the admission of guilt – *I am the one!* (§667) – and after another gesture of “renunciation of itself”, that a “reciprocal recognition which is the *absolute spirit*” (§670) is finally reached.

On this path Hegel regularly proceeds awry. Whenever there is an inequality, he tries to match the two sides not by raising the lower but by generously lowering the higher. It is always up to the subject to swallow its pride, to show humility and patience, to renounce to itself, to expose itself, to acknowledge its deficiency, to accept its inner split. In the chapter on conscience, for instance, conscience is not a moral subject equipped with a more thorough knowledge of the situation; it is rather a subject that, fully aware of all its deficiency, is able to *assume it, and yet* to act. In this sense no gap in the order of being is large enough that the subject would not be able to take it up. The wounds of the spirit, though, heal without leaving scars behind. In the exposition of self-consciousness we have thus seen that in the genesis of reason there is necessarily a moment of *violence* and *social domination* involved.<sup>26</sup> Any knowledge is to that effect caught in the web of power. And Hegel would agree: there is no pure knowledge in *that* sense. However, as the state often originates in violence without thereby necessarily resting on violence, in the same sense, for Hegel, being affected by power relation does not mean in itself that reason is any less reasonable.

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In any case, in the present paper we wanted to show that one major line in the development of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology* consists in a movement of progressive departicularisation. Hegel's lesson is not that we have to be prepared to risk our lives in order to obtain a particular identity of our own, but quite the contrary, that we must abandon our fixation to any particular in order to gain access to the true universal of thinking. In the opening pages of the *Science of Logic* Hegel accused Fichte that his characterisation of pure knowing as I acts “as a perpetual remainder of the subjective I whose limitation should be forgotten”. Since the initial shape of self-consciousness bears profoundly Fichtean marks, its dialectic could perhaps be explained in terms of wiping out this remainder of the subjective I. Or alternatively, it could be described as an attempt to “de-potentialize the subjective I” once undertaken by Schelling in order to clear the way for – reason.

26 Hegel's lesson in his presentation of self-consciousness would be that not only practical attitude and intersubjectivity, but also power relations are on equal ground conditions of the possibility of knowing. In this sense, social domination is a transcendental category.

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Zdravko Kobe

Istinsko žrtvovanje. O Hegelovom prikazu samosvesti

Rezime

Članak pruža sažetu interpretaciju Hegelovog tretmana samosvesti u *Fenomenologiji duha*, koju će predstaviti kao integralni deo sveukupnog iskustva svesti koje vodi od razuma do uma. Neposredni cilj teksta je misliti samostalnost i nesamostalnost, čisto i empirijsko *ja*, kroz jedinstvo samosvesti. Ovo podrazumeva dvostruko kretanje pronalaženja odgovarajuće egzistencije za čisto *ja* i raskidanje veza između empirijskog *ja* i partikularnosti. Naročito se osvrćemo na hegelijansku borbu za priznanje, koja namerava da pokaže kako udeo uma zahteva od subjekta raskidanje veza sa sopstvenom partikularnošću – subjekat žrtvuje ne samo svoj goli život već daleko više od toga, svoj partikularni identitet, ali i pored toga nastavlja da živi.

**Ključne reči:** Hegel, *Fenomenologija duha*, samosvest, želja, priznanje, gospodar i rob, žrtvovanje, departikularizacija, um

Jure Simoniti

## Hegel's Logic as the Exposition of God from the End of the World

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**Abstract** *The article attempts to reconstruct the logical space within which, at the beginning of Hegel's Logic, "being" and "nothing" are entitled to emerge and receive their names. In German Idealism, the concept of "being" is linked to the form of a proposition; Fichte grounds a new truth-value on the absolute thesis of the "thetical judgement". And the article's first thesis claims that Hegel couldn't have placed "being" at the beginning of this great system, if the ground of its logical space had not been laid out by precisely those shifts of German Idealism that posited the ontological function of the judgement. At the same time, the abstract negation, the absence of a relation and sufficient reason between "being" and "nothing", reveals a structure of an irreducibly dual beginning. The logical background of this original duality could be constituted by the invention of the "transcendental inter-subjectivity" in German Idealism, manifested, for instance, in Hegel's life-and-death struggle of two self-consciousnesses. The second thesis therefore suggests that "being" and "nothing" are elements of the logical space, established in concreto in a social situation of (at least) two subjects one of whom poses an affirmative statement and the other negates it abstractly. From here, one could draw out the coordinates of a sphere by the name of "public" whose structure is defined by the invalidation of two basic laws of thought, the law of non-contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason. The article shows how only the statements capable of absorbing negation, of sustaining a co-existence of affirmation and its symmetrical, abstract negation, can climb the ladder of public perceptibility and social impact.*

**Keywords:** *Hegel, being, nothing, negation, intersubjectivity, public*

The history of philosophy could be interpreted as a series of attempts to secure the priority of being over nothing. At the beginning of Western ontology, Parmenides states that "there is Being, but nothing is not". (Parmenides 1965: 54; fragm. VI.) Plato is less rigid on the matter, but he nevertheless claims "both that *that which is not* somehow is, and then again that *that which is* somehow is not", (Plato 1997: 262; *Sophist* 241d) thereby reducing nonbeing to a forced admission. Spinoza begins his *Ethics* with the definition of the "self-caused" as "that whose essence involves existence; or that whose nature can be conceived only as existing". (Spinoza 2002: 217 ((E I., d 1)) And Leibniz poses arguably the most

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famous philosophical question of all: “*why is there something rather than nothing?*” For nothing is simpler and easier than something”. (Leibniz 1989: 210) But Hegel seems to stand out from this tradition. He opens his great system with a simple assertion: “Being, pure being”, and “nothing, pure nothing”. Thus, the issue might be raised: If philosophy had traditionally been regarded as some sort of “guardian of being”, what changed with Hegel so that philosophy became just as much a “placeholder of nothing” as it is a “shepherd of being”? In what way the conditions of truth transformed in order for *both* being and nothing to start representing the entrance door to the kingdom of knowledge?

The categories of being and nothing have always hung suspended between symmetry and asymmetry, between logification and ontologization. Ontologically speaking, i.e., within the cosmic asymmetry of something vanquishing nothing, being seems to possess added value as compared to nothing. But logically speaking, being is still in need of the “question of being”, the *Seinsfrage*, and thus evidently requires to be somehow justified in the face of nothingness. It is not at all clear whether there is (ontologically) more being than nothing in the world, or they are (logically) equilibrated. Are then being and nothing elements of the ontological structure of the world, or only hypostases of the two most prosaic grammatical operations, affirmation and negation?

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The history of philosophy could also be recounted as an incessant interplay between almost literary sublimations on the one hand and sober logical disenchantments on the other. Philosophy, well aware of the discomforting logical parity of nothing, compensated and repaid the *credit* of the ontological priority of being with a number of philosophical myths, making use of dramatized, phantasmagorical narratives: in Parmenides, the epiphany of Being was introduced by mares carrying him to the goddess of truth, Plato invented the myth of *anamnesis*, Leibniz depicts God in the hall of spirits, Hegel conceives his *Logic* as “*the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit*”, (Hegel 2010: 29) and even in Heidegger, the ontological difference is temporalized in a history of *Ereignis* and *Gestell*. However, the history of philosophy also offers a series of contrary diagnoses which dismiss this epic, theatrical manoeuvres to ground the “wonder of Being”. Parmenides’ Being was exposed by Aristotle as merely the first inkling of the logically still inarticulate principle of contradiction. Plato’s ideas has time and again been read simply as hypostases of linguistic signs, of universal notions. Leibniz’s theodicy, the “best of all worlds”, could be explained

as a logical deduction of the principle of sufficient reason. And a similar “disillusioning” method can now be applied to Hegel's being and nothing at the beginning of his *Logic*. Let us finally venture to *reduce* Hegel's “God as he is before the creation of the world” to a formal, logical, perhaps ultimately even banal operation.

### Anacoluthon, proposition, and being

The question this article aims to answer is: What is the logical space in which the concepts of “being” and “nothing” could presume to function as the beginning of the system as well as of the world, its creation? What guided the hand of the author to choose and write down these two notions precisely?

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The opening of *The Science of Logic* should have been the most pure, modest, vacuous, abstract, nondescript beginning conceivable. And yet, it is not devoid of presuppositions. At this point, namely, we have already worked through and completed the path of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. We are now situated at the standpoint of the Spirit, and, as spiritual beings, we have internalized all the possible “mediations” of society, culture, history, inter-subjectivity, and, first and foremost, language. In language, the richness of Spirit has already performed its basic logification, or, as Hegel puts it in the preface to the second edition:

The forms of thought are first set out and stored in human *language* [...]. In everything that the human being has interiorized, in everything that in some way or other has become for him a representation, in whatever he has made his own, there has language penetrated ... (Hegel 2010: 12)

Hence, the seemingly guileless, “immediate” beginning of Hegel's *Logic*, this “[p]ure knowledge, thus *withdrawn* into this *unity*”, this “simple immediacy” (Hegel 2010: 47), is itself only a *pinnacle* and a *result* of the most massive and extensive process of “mediation”. To this essentially produced, and not given, immediacy Hegel bestows the name: *pure being*. Hegel's being is thus not the grand, smooth, and homogenous sphere of Parmenides, but an *emergent* spiritual entity: it is the point at which the mediation at its highest reach *switches* to immediacy. And for this reason, this simple being does not come alone, but rather in a pair: “*Being, pure being*”, is immediately, i.e., without any mediation whatsoever, followed by “*Nothing, pure nothingness*”. (Hegel 2010: 59)

Here, at the beginning of all beginnings, there are two acts of positing without a noun to attach a predicate to a subject. As is generally known,



Hegel opens his *Logic* with an anacoluthon, a *Satzbruch*, a broken, unfinished sentence. The omission of predication is programmatic. In the first edition of *The Science of Logic* in 1812, in one of the notes which he abandons in the second edition, Hegel performs a subtraction of possible predicates of being. He begins with "Being is absolute", reduces it to the tautology "Being is being", takes away the predicate, "Being is", and finally cuts off even the copula. The "being" of the beginning, he insists, can only be *satzlos ohne Behauptung oder Prädikat*:

*Pure being* or rather only *being*; propositionless without assertion or predicate. Or else, the assertion went back to intending [Meinen]. Being is only an exclamation which has its meaning solely in the subject. (Hegel 1812: 36; hereinafter translation mine)

And the question arises: What is the motive behind such vehement depredicativization of the beginning? Why being is trimmed down to a mere exclamation beyond assertion?

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The easiest answer would be that any sentence is by definition predicative, that it institutes a difference between the subject and the predicate and hence determines the subject; being, on the other hand, must remain pure and indeterminate. Already Plato claimed in *Parmenides* that the proposition "Being is One" contains two elements, being and One: "oneness always possesses being and being always possesses oneness. So, since it always proves to be two, it must never be one". (Plato 1997: 376; *Parmenides* 142e-143a) However, Hegel's anti-propositionality may have a deeper reason. Why then does Hegel begin his *Logic* with an anacoluthon? Why does it seem as if he needed to protect being from the sentence form? Why does his system begin with "being, pure being", without tolerating a copula and a predicate at its side, and why does this being then switch to "nothing, pure nothingness"?

The first triad of Hegel's *Logic*, "Being – Nothing – Becoming", is presumably the most interpreted part of the book, and many interpreters warn us against *reading too much into* this simple, utterly empty inception. With Hegel, so it is said, the opening never contains the matrix for the subsequent development of the system.<sup>1</sup> Rather, we have to be patient and wait until *die Sache selbst*, the thing itself, will unveil at the end, as a result. Perhaps the beginning of Hegel's *Logic* is precisely *uninterpretable*.

<sup>1</sup> This, for instance, is the stance of Dieter Henrich in "Anfang und Methode der Logik". (Henrich 1967: 73–94) In Slovenia, the thesis that we should not overestimate the abstract beginning of the *Logic* was advocated by Zdravko Kobe in his article "Much Ado about Being and Nothing". (Kobe 2013: 83–131)

We will try to show, however, that this humble prelude *may not possess any immediate meaning per se, but that the two names of its meaninglessness are not chosen by coincidence.*

Our thesis claims that there are historical and logical reasons to place being and nothing at the origin of the system of philosophy: this beginning may be empty “metaphysically”, but it is not devoid of systemic, structural, semantic, and metaphorical pre-determinations. With the concepts of Spirit, language, mediation, immediacy, exclamation, and propositionlessness, Hegel establishes a semantic coordinate system on the fertile ground of which the seeds of being and nothing will be able to sprout in the first place. There occurred a major shift in the conceptualization of truth, the status of the subject, the theory of judgment, perhaps even in the understanding of culture, in order for two most abstract, negatively related concepts to be able to actually *function as a beginning.*

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First, let us detect an interesting “historical” coincidence. Hegel explicitly stresses that being is *satzlos*, as if this *Satz* was some kind of a traumatic kernel of being. And, what is more, he conceives of being as *satzlos* at the peak of the philosophical movement called German Idealism which originated precisely from the *essential insight into an equiprimordiality of being and the proposition form.* Kant famously states in his *Critique of Pure Reason*:

*Being* is obviously not a real predicate, i.e., a concept of something that could add to the concept of a thing. It is merely the positing of a thing or of certain determinations in themselves. In the logical use it is merely the copula of a judgment. (Kant 1998: 567 (KrV A 598/B 626))

Being, *das Sein*, is now a mere position; for the real “existence” of a thing an entire context of experience is needed. With Kant’s being as positing, one of the basic concepts of German Idealism is born, Fichte’s positing, *Setzen*. “Positing” is an intermediary concept which connects being and proposition and provides the sentence with reality. Positing, *Setzen*, becomes the first impulse of being, and what is posited, *gesetzt*, is a sentence or proposition, *ein Satz*. In Fichte, the need for the Kantian divide between being as copula and being as existence becomes obsolete, since, after the thing-in-itself has been disposed of, being becomes a “real predicate”, the copula becomes the *raison d’être*, so to speak, and the proposition is now the most original logical form of ontology. If German Idealism had its own gospel, it would probably start with: “In the beginning was the Proposition, and the Proposition was with the Being, and

the Being was the Proposition".<sup>2</sup> One could say without exaggeration that German philosophy between Fichte, if not Kant, and Hegel invented *the ontological function of the proposition*. And the proposition form brings to the scene *a new quantum of truth*: the punctual creation of judging, the emergence of new facts that were not there before.

In Fichte, all judgments, analytical and synthetic, are only possible on the ground of the first positing, *die absolute Thesis*, which is by no means *satzlos*, as in Hegel, but can only be preformed by the third judgment form, the *thetical judgment*:

The thetical judgment is the one in which something does not equal something else and is not opposed to it, but is rather posed only as equal to itself [...]. The original highest judgment of this kind is *I am* in which nothing is being said about the I, but only the place of the predicate is infinitely left blank for the possible determination of the I. (Fichte 1845/1846: 117)

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The original thetical judgment *I am* is not a reference to a fact, a description of an experience, but a *constitution* of the fact through the act of positing a proposition. Fichte thus discovers a proposition which, by its mere emergence, sets the conditions of its own truth value, a proposition which *makes itself true* by means of being stated. In a word, he discovers the truth dimension which, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, will be called performative by Austin and an institutional fact by Searle.<sup>3</sup>

With a thetical judgment, Fichte came across an unusual phenomenon where, by saying something, one inadvertently creates a new world. Fichte may still have "burdened" every judgment with the "original substance" of the I, but he was nevertheless the first to point out the *essentially supplemental life of truth*: he detected the *absolute excess of every proposition over being*, the fact that the world never needed that surplus, so that, by judgments being uttered, new truth values actually emerge. And this is the point where the first thesis of this article can finally be articulated: the form of the thetical judgment *opened the new logical space of truth* without which it is impossible to understand Hegel's "being, pure being".

2 This *a priori* "propositionalization" of reality was obviously traumatic enough for Hölderlin and Schelling having to meet it with the first heresy, which posited the absolute, pre-discursive being *before* the first proposition. For every judgment, *Ur-Teil*, is an *ur-division*, *Ur-Teilung*. This subsequent justification of being before the proposition might well be an expression of opposing the excessive power of judgment, bestowed upon it by Kant and Fichte.

3 The other Fichte's example of a thetical judgment is: "Man is free", whereby this statement is not a case of stating facts but a concealed imperative: "Man must infinitely approach to an in itself unattainable freedom." (Fichte 1845/1846: 118)

To return to Hegel's *Satzlosigkeit* of the beginning, he seems at first sight to have suspended the very tendency of the movement whose heir he was. As the first impulse of thought, "being" is pre-propositional. Hegel himself claims that we are not asserting, just meaning or intending.<sup>4</sup> But if we interpret this "being" as an *Ursachverhalt*, ur-state, we could all too easily be tempted to understand it as a positive image, an experience, *Erlebnis*, a self-evidence, or even as some sort of primal cosmic fact. However, the impetus of our reading will oppose precisely the danger of understanding Hegel's being as the first intuition, the primordial inner sense of oneself, or even the big-bang of the universe, the first case of everything. "Being, pure being" is *not* any of these hermeneutic, phenomenological, existential, or even metaphysical entities. It is, as we shall see, a purely logical product.

858 How, then, should we explain this sudden apparition of "pure being"? Let us count up again the conditions of its emergence. First, against interpreting being as an ur-fact or a pre-propositional intuition, Hegel points out that we are always already situated within the sphere of Spirit and that everything is already permeated with language. Second, Hegel begins his *Logic* at the point where the totality of mediations transforms into a new quality, a new immediacy; we have put the whole spiritual history behind us, now we produce something new. Third, in German Idealism the category of "being" enters a necessary relation with the act of positing, of making a proposition; in this union of being and propositionality, a new truth value is produced: every proposition generates a creative surplus over the given being. Fourth, Hegel states "being" by way of exclamation and without a predicate. Some recognize in this non-predicative anacoluthon a pre-propositional intuition, but perhaps the meaning of this *interjection* of "being" is exactly the opposite. Since being is a *product* of Spirit, it seems reasonable to assume that the beginning of the *Logic* does not perform a reconstruction of a pre-propositional simplicity, but rather evokes a form of recess, leap, or even event. Instead of representing a simple anteriority, it is far more plausible that being is originally a supplement. The "reason" of being does not consist in something

4 "Being" has often been interpreted as an analytically deduced fact before uttering, a surrogate for the intellectual intuition, a sort of *Ursachverhalt*, ur-state. According to Koch, "being" has a "form of a pre-propositional intuition" (Koch 2000: 145, hereinafter translation mine) and is a retroactively constructed "fact of the first thought": "In retrospect it turns out, on the basis of inserting nothing between pure being and becoming, that pure being is an imaginary vanishing point of pure thought." (Koch 2000: 153) Being and nothing are thus retroactive logical deductions of the fact that we make judgments about a certain existence.

below or behind the possible proposition but rather in the emancipating surface. Bernard Bourgeois, for instance, claims that the beginning of the *Logic* expresses the decision of pure thinking and demands a creative intervention of the philosophizing subject: "*Hegel's Reason is essentially 'decision,'*" he claims. (Bourgeois 1992: 132; translation mine). A system of German Idealism always commences by assuming a new dimension, by instating an event, a sudden impact of something unconditional and absolute.<sup>5</sup> *In philosophy, the world begins to begin with a bang.* And the only commonplace, trivial, non-metaphysical form that conforms to these conditions is a proposition. At the beginning, a bang occurs, a somersault, something undeducible; and this does not occur *before* the first proposition is uttered, but *through* the proposition and *with* it. At this point of a thorough "spiritualization", even "linguaging" of being, the only "fact" which Hegel's system could detect at all is the mere thetical emergence of a proposition. The system now only "skims the cream" of the absolutely immediate, supplemental, eventful, and new surface of a proposition – and it names it "being". For, at the beginning, there is no other being than this mere excess.

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What we are trying to point out is a crucial similarity of conditions for the emergence of two entities: Hegel's "being" and the "thetical factum", i.e., the fact of a proposition being uttered. Both of them are spiritual (even linguistic), absolutely immediate, creative, and novel. The "thetical factum" is the one and only form distinguished by being a pure positing, a coincidence of the conditional and the unconditional, an element of excess over the existent and given, an unnecessary addition of a new fact which presupposes the totality of mediations of Spirit in order to emerge, but at the same time functions as an unequivocal immediacy of a new event.

To resume and put it in more modest terms, *Hegel could not have conceived of this primary "being", if the basic mind shift, taking place in German Idealism, did not first open the logical space for the ontological function of a proposition.* Only within a mentality which finally recognized the propositional positing and discovered a supplemental emergence of being, of truth no longer being attached to facticity, experience, and the givenness of nature, is it possible to develop a sense for that surplus dimension of truth which Hegel names "being, pure being".

<sup>5</sup> The general tendency of German Idealism is to presuppose a certain *creatio ex nihilo* at the beginning, a self-creation, a positing without ground or reason. The first act is precisely not deducible from the principle of sufficient reason but asserts itself against it.

According to our thesis, the word “being” does not refer to any thing, given fact, state of affairs, intuition, experience, or principle, but solely to the absolute immediacy of positing, a minimal event whose logical space was established by the theticity of a proposition. But why, then, can this “being” only be articulated with an anacoluthon? Why is it *satzlos* if it only expresses the gist of a proposition? Hegel’s “being, pure being” must always be understood as *an answer to Fichte’s I*, the true origin of the thetical judgment. In Fichte, the fact of theticity is immanently bound to the ur-substance of the I as a self-consciousness. Fichte’s thetical judgment is still committed to a “worldview”, a deductive ontology based on the first principle and caught up in the space of imperatives and infinite tasks. The self-creation of the I is “loaded” with subjective idealism, activism, tendentiousness, asymptotic approach, overcoming hurdles, infinite growth, i.e., with the typical imaginarium of Fichte’s philosophy. The aim of Hegel’s “being, pure being”, however, was to liberate a certain emergent and supplemental truth production from any determinate substance and its necessary subtext. It could almost be said that, since Hegel aimed at capturing the very dimension of truth which emerges *by way* of a proposition, he could not condemn it to any particular proposition, to this or that utterance, for every specific, articulate judgment would already *name* a subject, thus inaugurating a substance from which the truth value would derive. If we read Hegel against Fichte, Hegel’s “being” seems merely to skim the cream off the top of theticity, posed by the *I am*, without also scooping the substance of the I. Hegel’s first “element” strips off the surface and separates it from the act whereby it came into existence in the first place.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, Fichte still founded a *Realontologie* on his thetical judgment, while Hegel seems to nurture the sensibility to capture some other, superficial effects which arise with *every* proposition. Hegel’s system is not one to rest on the point of its origin and deduce everything from it but rather *pursues the eventfulness of truth*, i.e., the elements of pure immediacy which sprout up after the whole world has been converted to the mediation of Spirit. Hegel’s “truth” consists in results rather

6 If we place the two great “beginnings” of German Idealism, Fichte’s “*I am*” and Hegel’s “being”, in a fraction, we can see that it is “am” and “being” that cancel each other out, and it is the I that remains as an alien element. “Being” is thus not the substitute for the “I”, as it has been, to Hegel’s great regret, often implied, but the substitute for the verb “am”. And this “being” is solely a transcript of the *emergent* dimension of the “am”, the dimension of positing without possessing its own subject. It is a distillation of the pure theticity which occurs in a certain “am”, but without this “am” being a predicate of a certain “I”.

than in roots, in effects rather than in causes, in purposes rather than in motives, in ascents rather than in descents, in emergences rather than in reductions. And "being" is a name for the very X which, already at the beginning, designates the Hegelian inversion of the timeline, the fact that only the end will be able to set the conditions of possibility of the beginning. It is an *anti-origin* and it represents precisely this supplemental nature of being. Of course, our thesis is only plausible if we presume that Hegel himself was unable to comprehend the real scope of his operation and thus regrettably wrapped up the categories of his *Logic* in the pathos of God's thoughts before the creation of the world. But after the linguistic turn, we can finally recognize this enigmatic yet void and bland "being" as what it really is: being signifies the lack of the highest principle, the absence of a *word* from the meaning of which the world could be deduced. There is no substance made to measure the beginning, no Ego, God, Idea, or Element, for *the world begins with a surplus*. Hegel's *Logic* is, if anything, *the exposition of God as he is at the end of the world*.

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### **Nothing, mere "no", and abstract negation**

However, this beginning is most feeble and can only be kept alive by what comes next. "Being, pure being" is, on the one hand, void enough to be deemed to be something new, a supplement which is not deducible from a previous state of affairs, but, on the other hand, it is also too void to leave any trace in the given state. After all, a proposition dies away after some trepidation in the air and never comes back. In like manner, the absolute immediacy of being could not have caused any effect if there was no *logical resonance* which would detect it as an event. The next step Hegel takes is precisely to elaborate the logical space in which the effects of being could be captured, so that this being would not seep away like a shout in the woods, an utterance heard by no one.

Therefore being never comes alone; it necessarily comes in pairs with nothing. If being is a mere supplement, then a membrane of sensibility is needed to perceive it and to recognize the fact that beyond deduction, cause, effect, and sufficient reason *something is nevertheless taking place*. The immateriality of being must trigger an echo in order to be; being would be nothing if it weren't resounded by nothing. And if we claimed that Hegel's being could only have emerged in the logical space of *theticity*, now, the second great question arises: *What is the logical space of the emergence of nothing?*

The first thing to be considered is the fact that *there is no deduction between the elements*. Nothing is not derived from being, it only, so to speak, *dashes* at being. In the first edition, Hegel claims:

Being as it is entirely for itself is the indeterminate; hence, it has no relation to the other; thus it seems that one cannot *proceed from this beginning*, namely from itself, and the proceeding can only occur when something foreign is related to it *from the outside*. The proceeding that being is the same as nothing appears as a second, absolute beginning... (Hegel 1812: 36)

From being nothing follows, and precisely for this reason, nothing is necessary. It represents the fact that being possesses no inside from where the progress could be possible. The basic function of nothing is to express the pure exteriority of its addition.

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We shall never understand the opening of Hegel's *Logic* if we dive into the semantics of the words "being" and "nothing". Instead, we have to understand them as non-significant elements of an *irreducibly double beginning*. There is no beginning, if there are not *two* beginnings, and their duality is extrinsic, straightforward, and not deducible from a single principle. Duality is not a trivial quality of being and nothing, a fact of their addition. Rather, being and nothing are *essentially trivial elements of their original duality*. It is not the case that the entire universe rests upon the shoulders of primary elements, which, accidentally, are two by number, but rather the case that *the system needs to begin with an irreducible duality*, and, then, points out the only two elements which could carry and express it. It is the presupposed duality which retroactively selects the two factors as fulfilling the one condition: that they are indeterminate enough for the reflexion between them to be utterly void and abstract, so that they do not enter a relation, do not reflect, determine, and abolish each other, but rather only *switch over into one another*. And it seems that only being and nothing fulfil this systemic requirement to represent an absolute and abstract negation without any possibility of mediation. As Zdravko Kobe puts it: »Being is the indeterminate, and *nothing is neither the truth nor the negation and particularly not a sublation of being*.« (Kobe 2013: 126; translation mine)

The most authentic *meaning* of being and nothing should perhaps be translated into a slogan: *One beginning is already two beginnings*. And here, the famous dictum from Hegel's *Phenomenology* comes to mind: "*Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness*." (Hegel 1977: 110) Or even: "A self-consciousness exists for a *self-consciousness*." (Hegel 1977: 110) The first appearance of the logical



space of this “irreducible duality” in Hegel is the master-slave dialectic, the two self-consciousnesses, the emergence of inter-subjectivity. But here Hegel is merely following a broader tendency of his period. One of the greatest achievements of German Idealism was the *discovery of the transcendental dimension of inter-subjectivity*. It was Fichte who maintained that, in order to become a rational being, one first needs to be treated as such by another of the same kind:

the other was *compelled* already, in his original influence upon me, compelled as a rational being (i.e. *bound* by consistency) to treat me as a rational being; and indeed, that he was compelled to do so by *me*... [...] [O]*riginal* relation is already a reciprocal interaction. (Fichte 2000: 69)

Here, the interaction between two rational beings is prior to the rationality of any of the two. The relation precedes the existence of its parts – this might be called the “logical space of inter-subjectivity”.

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Now, our thesis claims the following. Inter-subjectivity forms the logical background against which the duality of being and nothing must inadvertently be interpreted. If we derived being from the logical space of the *thetical factum*, being and nothing can now be derived from the logical space constituted by two subjects, i.e., by inter-subjectivity.

The parallels do not end there. At the beginning of the *Logic*, there are being, nothing, abstract negation, and irreducible duality. In the *Phenomenology*'s formation of self-consciousness, there are life, death, sacrifice, and two self-consciousnesses (i.e. master and slave). The immediate passage from life to death in the notorious “staking one's life” (Hegel 1977: 114) is thus not an expression of biological facticity, but a product of the external negation of struggle in which one's life can be put at stake *solely for the eyes of another subject*. The winner in this game is the one *capable of assuming the logical form of abstract negation*: here, “death” does not mean “acceptance of one's mortality”, “reconciliation with the entropy of matter”, “enduring fate”, etc., but an experience of the logical equivalence of life and death. And for this experience of sacrificing life and risking death, essentially two subjects are needed. Viewed in this light, the master is the first figure of abstract negation in Hegel's philosophy. Similarly, in the *Logic*, being cannot be converted to nothing without the presupposition of exteriority and non-reflexivity of two irreducible positions:

But the issue first of all is not the form of opposition, which is at the same time the form of *reference*, but the abstract, immediate negation, the nothing purely for itself, negation devoid of reference – and this can also be expressed, if one so wishes, simply by saying “nothing”. (Hegel 2010: 60)

The original is more unequivocal: “die beziehungslose Verneinung, – was man, wenn man will, auch durch das bloße: *Nicht* ausdrücken könnte.” (Hegel 1990: 73) The relation between being and nothing is not a “nothing”, a substance of nothingness, but even less, *das bloße Nicht*, “the mere not”. If we take into account the logical space of irreducibly two subjects and implement between the two the abstract relation of “not”, then it is not going too far to picture this situation figuratively: as the one subject saying “yes” and the other “no”, or, more precisely, the one stating an affirmative proposition and the other negating it by merely adding a “not”. The only possible *relation* to carry, to perform, to stage the exteriority, unrelatedness, non-mediability, and abstractness of the negation is a situation of two subjects, the one passing an affirmative judgment and the other saying “no” merely by virtue of the irreducibility of his logical position.

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Perhaps the crucial entrance exam, a rite of passage of a sort, at the door of inter-subjectivity consists in the test whether one is capable of thinking and enduring “nothing in itself”, the immediate negation, the mere “not” coming from the outside, just so, for no reason, and without being deducible from the affirmative stance. Are we capable of facing Goethe’s Mephistopheles saying: “I am the spirit that negates”? (Goethe 1990: 161) And, in a way, the touchstone of achieving self-consciousness is structurally similar to that of entering logical thinking: the consciousness had to risk death in order to become self-conscious, and the subject of logical thinking

ought to raise his mind to this abstract universality in which it is in fact indifferent to him whether the hundred dollars, whatever the quantitative relation that they might have to his financial state, are or are not; just as it would be indifferent to him whether he himself is or is not, that is, whether he is or is not in finite life ... (Hegel 2010: 65)

Thus, the grand opening of the *Logic* may be interpreted merely as a discourse of two stances which have already dissociated from their finite necessities and concerns of life and risked their “semantic death”. In this view, Hegel’s *Logic* is a discourse of the master, a discourse of the uninterested, pure thought, but with an essential addition: the master is a logically unstable position in need of another master, standing opposite to him as the *subject of the abstract negation*. Therefore, the *Logic* is a *discourse of two masters*.

### The logical space of a new truth form

If we count up a few conditions, the function of the proposition form in German Idealism, the invention of inter-subjectivity in that period, the necessary duality of two elements at the beginning of the *Logic*, the relation

of the external, unmediated, abstract negation between the two, the first appearance of this kind of irreducible duality in Hegel's master-slave dialectic, then, it seems, *being and nothing can be interpreted as elements of the logical space which unfolds within a social situation where a proposition is posited while automatically provoking its own negation*. Our thesis can be expressed in more modest terms: only an inter-subjective situation in which an affirmation appears simultaneously with the negation and is logically equiprimordial with it, corresponds to the same conditions to which Hegel's being and nothing must abide. These conditions are, above all, three: first, the concomitance of mediation and immediacy (a proposition presupposes a comprehensive adoption of the sphere of Spirit), second, the relation of abstract negation (expressed most paradigmatically by the "mere not" of the propositional negation), and, third, the irreducible duality (since affirmation and negation demand two subjects to be uttered by).

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The primary objective of this article is to prove that being and nothing are not simply elements of a given universe, but necessarily fundamentals of a new logical space, outlined and contrived by the form of inter-subjectivity. There are a number of hints, perhaps even of small argumentative lapses, occurring to Hegel somewhat underhandedly, which suggest that being and nothing should *not* be read as elements of a physical, cosmological ontology. Of course, even Hegel cannot refrain, in the third and fourth remark, from reducing these two "qualities" within the framework of the physics of quantities. "There is nothing", he says, "which is not an *intermediary state between being and nothing*". (Hegel 2010: 80) And yet, in his definition of "becoming", Hegel stresses the essentially *perfect tense* of this relation:

*Pure being and pure nothing are therefore the same*. The truth is neither being nor nothing, but rather that being has passed over into nothing and nothing into being – "has passed over", not passes over. (Hegel 2010: 59–60)

Here, Hegel seems to oppose Fichte's third category of limitation as "positing of a quantity". Hence, he makes explicit that the relation of being and nothing should not be thought of in terms of quantitative dilutions of one part within the other, but, first and foremost, as the *logical form of pure leaping over*, of the contraposition of two elements which provoke each other without allowing any continuous, gradual intermediate states, of persisting at the extreme ends without any possibility of meeting halfway. Being and nothing are anything but the first elements of pre-Socratic cosmologies; there is no relation of conditioning, originating, germinating, merging, and compounding between them:

Thus it is inadmissible to say: nothing is the ground of being, or being is the ground of nothing; nothing is the *cause* of being, and so forth; or, the transition into nothing can have occurred only *under the condition* that something is, or the transition into being only *under the condition* of non-being. (Hegel 2010: 78)

In order to truly grasp the two elements, we must presuppose a sphere of being converting into nothing *fully and without reason*. An entirely new logical space is opened, suspending the two central logical principles of classical logic, law of non-contradiction and principle of sufficient reason.

We are entering here *a new range of truth*, no longer based upon any “real ontology” of causes and effects, foundations and deductions, reasons and consents, a range grounded solely on its own imminent emergence. This is where truth becomes *speculative* instead of argumentative, representational, adequational, corresponding to a given reality etc. For it is precisely the speculative judgment which bears the “scarlet letter” of irreducible duality:

In this connection, we must observe right at the beginning that the proposition, in the form of *a judgment*, is not adept to express speculative truths ...

For the purpose of expressing the speculative truth, the defect is first remedied by adding the contrary proposition, namely “being *and nothing are not the same*”, which we also stated above. [...] This proposition is then undeniably asserted; but *the statement is just as false as it is correct*, for once one proposition is taken out of its speculative context, the other also must be given at least as much attention and articulation. (Hegel 2010: 66–67)

Here, we witness a coincidence of great logical beauty: not only does every speculative judgment display an *a priori* duality of affirmation and negation, but being and nothing exhibit the very same structure of the abstract negation: *they seem to be the elementary embodiments of the copulas of two consecutive judgments forming a speculative truth*. Hegel often played with the possibility of the subject becoming a predicate (as in the case of Julius Caesar), but here something even more spectacular occurs: the subjects, being and nothing, are shifted to the place of the copulas “are” and “are not”. Being and nothing of the entrance to the *Logic* thus in a way anticipate the insight that *truth is originally and essentially bi-propositional*.

And we claim, of course, that only the *transcendental dimension of intersubjectivity* transcends the constraints of non-contradiction and sufficient reason and allows this new conceptualization of logic. It is the

logical space of inter-subjectivity alone that has the structural capacity of trimming down the phenomenology of being and nothing to the minimum of pure and void extremization, where there is no determinate, content-related, relative, but only immediate, saltational, discreet, abstract transition between the two.

Let us now summarize the qualities of this new logical space. First, the relation between being and nothing is one of perfective, not of imperfective transition. Second, between the two there is no relation of causality, conditioning, justification, or sufficient reason; the "leaping over" is automatic and absolute. Third, the speculative judgment demands two propositions concurrently. In order to "dramatize" this entirely logical situation, one could stage it as a speech process extending between a position and an opposition. In short, to bestow some flesh and blood to this abstract form, one could imagine being as an instance of position, expressed in the fact of making an utterance, and nothing as an instance of opposition, appending "the mere not" to the affirmative stance. The logical space, within which being and nothing can make any sense at all, is thus *the inter-subjective situation where an assertion and its negation appear simultaneously*.

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Our last thesis now claims that the only "environment" in which both affirmation and negation can live side by side equiprimordially and irreducibly, the only environment able to detect and realize the absolute theticity of a proposition by means of perverting it into its abstract negation, is *the public sphere*. As we shall see, only propositions capable of co-existing with their own negations can climb the ladder of public perceptibility and, from there, determine the new consistence of reality. It is the public sphere that transforms the abstract negation into an ontological principle.

### **Being and nothing as elements of the theory of the public sphere**

The true logical invention of the theory of propositions is the fact that no one really *interpellated* a proposition to enter the world; reality has no need of being redoubled in the sphere of the verbal. Propositions have no sufficient reason, rather they appear as supplements, creations, decisions. However, it is the "spontaneous ideology" of propositions to believe in their deducibility from reality: they usually consider the facticity to which they refer or the pragmatic intent of the speaker to be the sufficient reason for their own emergence. A proposition given in its singularity

is by default attached to a certain *extra-discursive substance*: to empirical knowledge, practical interest, information transfer, communicative purpose, position of power, etc. This is why the first operation of theticity must be joined by the second operation of abstract negation. It is not until a proposition is faced with the negative version of its sense, until an "other" appears before me and merely negates what I have just said, that the emergent and eventful nature of *every* proposition comes to light. If we claim "We support public health system!", our stance may still be suspected of advocating our private ends in the matter. However, when we expose ourselves to the possible negation which claims "We, however, support the privatization of the health system!", an opposition whose momentary unabolishable possibility we must concede to, the bond of our particular interests is finally broken. Only by admitting the logical parity of negation, an "opinion" can become a "thought".

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*A proposition must be negated in order for its original theticity to become manifest.* The propositions that cannot bear their negations are merely empirical and pragmatic statements; they are like hundred dollars about which it is *not* indifferent whether they are or are not. The moment a proposition expresses a speculative truth, however, a complex subjective structure is established: the thetical statement is redoubled in its external negation, and this redoubling demands two subjects, constituting an antagonism. Or, in other words, Hegel's form of speculative truth, the concomitance of affirmation and negation, is not an extravagance from the ivory tower of German metaphysics, but demonstrates a specific, concrete, even highly normal functioning of the public sphere.

We are reading Hegel's *Logic* as "an exposition of God from the end of the world", as "a discourse of two masters" who can already afford to state propositions in their pure excessive surplus, arranged only by the form of abstract negation. A very similar structure can be found in one of the most influential (and, needless to say, strikingly beautiful) theories of society, in Luhmann's sociology. Just like Hegel defined the relation between being and nothing to be without cause, ground, or reason, Luhmann defines the "code" as a "rule of duplication" which ascribes a *Nein-Fassung*, "no-version", to every *Ja-Fassung*, "yes-version". And this ascription is performed in a precisely Hegelian manner: it is spontaneous, immediate, and has no reason. In one of the brilliant passages of his work, Luhmann speaks of

the system's "disclosure" through linguistic coding, which means for us the doubling of expressive possibilities by a yes/no difference.

Thereby the system also creates a *negative version of meaning for itself, to which nothing in the environment corresponds* [italics mine] and which the system can control only by self-computation. [...]

The closure of a meaning system can thus be understood as the control of its own possibilities for negation while producing its own elements. Every transition implies a no (however indeterminate) and can be conditioned by conditioning its use. (Luhmann 1995: 444-445)

Luhmann shows an emergent causality of a proposition being uttered, whereby in the latency of the system, only by way of its self-computation, a negative version of meaning springs up, even though the real “state of affairs” never gave any reason for it. There is thus an utterly definite and even “normal” occurrence within a social system which, at a single stroke, invalidates both the law of non-contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason.

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Let us invent a specific example of Luhmann's *Nein-Fassung* and imagine being in a relationship with a beautiful woman who believes that her beauty is an infinite credit which others must not cease to repay. Perhaps, in a period of her life she rejoiced in a few compliments, which usually take the form of an affirmative proposition: “You are beautiful!” But then the time comes when these flatteries run dry for no particular reason; perhaps one is weary of repeating the same statements over and over again. But within the system, *the first affirmation automatically produces a latent negation*, which may lack a sufficient reason, but it nevertheless subsists as a mere potentiality. It can happen that every time a compliment fails to appear, the beautiful woman starts asking herself if the opposite is now true, if she, in fact, has become ugly. The mere privation is already presumed to be a negation. In this *emergent world* situated beyond the principles of non-contradiction and sufficient reason, the first affirmation creates a vacuum of possible negation, and a woman, having been flattered a few times in the past, now hovers over the abyss, which only hypochondria, jealousy, and self-praise can fill.

Luhmann, of course, preferred less self-indulgent cases of this spontaneous redoubling of the code and applied it rather to political systems. He divided the political code upon the dichotomy of progressive/conservative:

This double paradigm [...] assigns a counterpart to every political topic. [...] The code induces a downright forced duplication of the political reality; it belongs to the structure of political topics and is a condition of their politization. The moment a topic breaks out, the progressive and conservative forces appear ... (Luhmann 2011: 67; translation mine)

Luhmann thus draws the abscissa and the ordinate of the “public sphere” in the fundamental opposition to its usual coordinates in the theories of communication and consensus. In the latter, every dissent has its purpose in the final consent, and every concurrency of affirmation and negation is “sublated” within the higher affirmation; naturally, the consensus is conceived in a way that it abides to the law of non-contradiction and is established by means of the best of sufficient reasons. Habermas’s universal pragmatics, together with other theories of communication, seems only to translate the principles of non-contradiction and sufficient reason from the area of empirical reality, scientific facticity, and everyday practices to the domain of inter-subjectivity. Our objective, however, was to outline an entirely different landscape of the public discourse, following the principle of Hegel’s abstract, void negation, his “mere not”, and Luhmann’s self-computation of the system, his “however indeterminate no”. Here, affirmation and negation persist in the symmetry of equivalence, while their split takes place without any reason, without rational justification and argumentation.

Perhaps, there exists no public stance without also presupposing the position of the irreducible other whose place is in advance channelled by the matrix of abstract negation. And only within this “logical space” does inter-subjectivity become a *concept* and not merely a representation of manifold social phenomena. Its formal definition does not include the rich, particular realms of education, family, recognition, community, tradition, i.e., all the positive transfers of social customs and mores. Thus, the minimal “formal” definition goes as follows: *the logical structure of inter-subjectivity is established where the mere negation, i.e., the cancellation of the law of non-contradiction, figures as sufficient reason to invalidate of the principle of sufficient reason*. This means that within the space of inter-subjectivity, within the public sphere, no reason is ever needed to attach the “mere not” to any possible statement – and it is precisely by the force of this “not” that the affirmative statement will become truly “universal”, that is, of no other interest than public.

The public sphere is a complex logical space with its own regularities: only the propositions capable of simultaneously occupying both extremes, position and opposition, affirmation and symmetric negation, will reach the highest level of the hierarchy of public perceptibility. Society is constantly witnessing an emergence of a number of “positivities”, expressed in affirmative judgments: a train derailed, a new law was adopted, elections took place. However, to become the subject of public debate, a



topic must undergo a process of rigorous selection: *only a matter about which it is possible to disagree within the form of symmetrical opposition can become publicly exploitable*. The public sphere is not necessarily a neutral reservoir of all the issues relevant for some sort of “common good” or “general interest”. It is rather an articulate field of hierarchies organized by the selection which lets pass through the bottleneck only the elements that can be formalized in a symmetrically opposite way, i.e., the statements that allow the concomitance of affirmation and negation without becoming contradictory and thus logically abolishable. Perhaps, the general interest is not defined by what is best for all, but by what there is disagreement about.

### **Inter-subjectivity as an ontological principle**

At first sight it may seem that we have only extrapolated one of the basic forms of Hegel's *Logic*, the abstract negation,<sup>7</sup> to the specific area of public discourse. And yet, we insist that there is something necessary and reciprocal about this extrapolation. The functioning of the public sphere is not only a heuristic illustration of Hegel's being and nothing, but represents the opening of the space in which being and nothing become established as corner stones of a new universe.

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It was our intention to reconstruct the logical space in which Fichte could discover his “thetical judgment” and Hegel could inaugurate negation as the basic logical category. German Idealism was a period that elevated social facts to the status of principles: first, the transcendental dimension of morality was invented (Kant), then that of language (Herder, Hamann, and Humboldt), of *Sittlichkeit*, ethical life, and law (Fichte and Hegel), and, finally, even of history (Schelling and Hegel). A new range of truth values was introduced which contaminated the immediate reality with the forms of social bonds, language structures, inter-subjective antagonisms, and historical processes, and this new “truth” was no longer ascertainable by the principles of identity, non-contradiction, excluded middle, or sufficient reason. Suddenly, the phenomena rose to the surface at which the reductionist methods of rationalism and empiricism found themselves to be at the loss of words. From this historical perspective, Hegel's beginning the *Logic* with being and nothing also represents a radical rupture with the Parmenidean and Aristotelian ontology of identity and non-contradiction, as well as with the Cartesian and Leibnizian ontology of

<sup>7</sup> Abstract negation is, however, not a model for all other negations, such as dialectical, concrete, determinate negation, negation of negation etc.

the cause having at least as much reality as the effect. In the realm of Spirit, history, culture, law, there is no less nothing than there is being and an effect can have a greater amount of reality than its cause. The price to be paid for this "inter-subjectivization of reality" is thus the sacrifice of the great cosmic priority of being: when two people face each other, nothing turns out to be just as primary and fundamental as being, and the abstract, excessive negation proves to be even *trueer* than any material causality. It is only in this new world that the pure emergence of being and nothing, their absolute surplus and abstract immediacy, can figure as its beginning.

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However, by interpreting being and nothing as two "fundamentals" of the "logical space of inter-subjectivity", as abstractions of two subject-positions, we do not thereby propose a thesis on the entire structure and progress of *The Science of Logic*. The following categories of "Being", such as existence, something and an other, restriction and the ought, one and many, repulsion and attraction, quantitative relations of direct, inverse ratio, and ratio of powers, chemical elective affinities, etc., will recapitulate some sort of inventory of the then existing scientific knowledge: the initially simple and abstract elements will differentiate in the increasingly complex physical, chemical, arithmetic, and algebraic entities. Thus, in our reading, being and nothing do not constitute a matrix for the subsequent development of pure thought. At the utmost, they represent the introductory "bottleneck", a narrowing of the conditions for the admission of forms that could henceforth be deemed "logical".

In this view, being and nothing embody the abstract negation, the most rudimentary of all negations, the *zero point of Hegel's logical operations*. In its first appearance, "negation" means nothing more than the need for the *other* subject to say "no", so that our own proposition could be detached from the usual descriptive, intentional, communicative purposes of speech, thereby risking the "semantic death" and establishing itself as a pure positing of being. At the most elemental level, being and nothing stand for *the decision to think pure thought*. Traditionally, the subject of philosophy has always been conceived as a subject of biographical eternity, a subject of continually growing knowledge, of asymptotic approach to reality, of infinite moral tasks, of conquering new lands. Hegel, on the other hand, erected a stage where the new logic of being and nothing drives a wedge into these stretches of "bad infinities": the two subjects meet face to face, eyeball to eyeball, and behind their backs the solid lines of their biographies crumble into dust. Only within this "inter-subjective

closure" will the abstract negation break off and suspend the positive continuity of subjective interests and reasons, and the pure thought of logic will become possible.

Finally, let us conclude with pointing out that Hegel's "mere not" was not some esoteric peculiarity of his, but, at the time, this contradictory and unreasonable logical form became almost a matter of style. Arguably the most famous scene of the entire Romantic literature is the first conversation between Faust and Mephistopheles in Goethe's monumental play. The same status that Hamlet's dictum "To be or not to be, that is the question" enjoys in the Renaissance literature, the already cited Mephistopheles's adage "*Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint*" occupies in Romanticism. The Renaissance monologue was replaced by the Romantic dialogue, but the interlocutor, Mephistopheles, has nothing of substance to say except to embody the void, formal, abstract negativity, the mere *Verneinung* of whatever Faust has stated. It is this most abstract dialogical structure which may provide us with the shortest definition of Romanticism: it is the period of included contradiction without any reason. And it appears that Hegel opened his *Logic* precisely with this knot in which contradiction coincides with the lack of reason by virtue of being and nothing relating to each other solely in the form of the "mere not".

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Jure Simoniti

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Hegelova Logika kao prikaz Boga sa kraja sveta

#### Rezime

U članku se pokušava rekonstruisati logički prostor u kojem je na početku Hegelove *Logike* bila moguća pojava i imenovanje „bića“ i „ničega“. U nemačkom idealizmu se sa Kantom i Fihtom pojam „bića“ počinje vezivati za formu rečenice. Fihte osniva novu istinitosnu vrednost na apsolutnoj tezi „tetične presude“. Prva teza je da Hegel „biće“ ne bi mogao postaviti na početak nekog sistema, a da njegov logički prostor nisu pre toga formirali upravo oni misaoni pokreti nemačkog idealizma, koji su znali misliti ontološku funkciju presude. Istovremeno, apstraktna negacija, odsustvo odnosa između „bića“ i „ničega“, prikazuje strukturu ireduktibilnog dvojnog početka. Logičku pozadinu ove izvorne dvojnosti čini teorijski pronalazak transcendentalne intersubjektivnosti u nemačkom idealizmu, koji se na primer manifestuje u Hegelovoj borbi za život i smrt između dve samosvesti. Druga teza stoga tvrdi, da su „biće“ i „ništa“ dva trenutka logičkog prostora, koji se svojoj konkretnosti lansiraju kroz socijalnu situaciju (barem) dva subjekta, od kojih jedan nudi afirmativnu presudu, dok drugi istu samo apstraktno negira. Iz toga se mogu očitati koordinate sfere koja nosi ime javnost, a čija struktura predviđa ukidanje dva najvažnija misaona zakona logičkog mišljenja: princip neprotivrečnosti i princip dovoljnog razloga. Time dokazujemo kako se na vrh hijerarhije javne percepcije i na taj način stvarnoga društvenog uticaja popnu samo izjave koje u svom sadržaju apsorbuju apstraktnu rečeničnu negaciju, dakle izjave koje su u stanju da preuzmu istovremenu koegzistenciju afirmacije i simetrične, apstraktne negacije svog sadržaja.

**Ključne reči:** Hegel, biće, ništa, negacija, Luman, intersubjektivnost, javnost

Mladen Dolar

## The Owl of Minerva from Dusk till Dawn, or, Two Shades of Gray

**Abstract** *The paper takes as its starting point the figure of the owl as the emblem of philosophy, it looks at its history and takes up its most significant philosophical use, the notorious passage where Hegel uses the owl as the indication of philosophy's necessary belatedness. This is the passage which is usually taken as the point of indictment of Hegel's position and the role he ascribed to philosophy. Hegel's adage 'What is rational is actual, and what is actual is rational' is scrutinized in its various aspects, particularly in view of its other version, 'what is rational must happen'. The tension between the 'is' and the 'ought' is perhaps the clue to understanding this adage, where Hegel doesn't opt for the one or the other, but aims at the paradoxical intersection of the two. Hegel's adage is put in contrast with Marx's Thesis Eleven. The paper considers the concepts of the rational, the actual, the belatedness/retroaction, the grayness and finally the owl (and the part that bestiary plays in philosophy), thus trying to circumscribe the task that should be assigned to philosophy.*

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**Keywords:** *Hegel, the owl of Minerva, reason, actuality, retroaction, Heine, Marx*

The owl always served as an emblem of philosophy. The connection has its genealogy, its founding myth, philosophy has always been a Greek affair, bearing the mark of its Greek origin however universal and global it has become. The best Greek poster during the debt crisis ran: 'We gave you philosophy, we gave you democracy, we gave you theater, now it's pay-back time', and indeed if there would have to be a default on 'the Greek debt', then on the European side, not the Greek. The owl has been the animal accompanying Athena (the Latin Minerva), the goddess of wisdom and the patroness of Athens, the birthplace of philosophy proper, hence the philosophical 'patroness saint'. The image of the owl is all-pervasive in the Greek and particularly the Athenian culture, to the point that Chris Marker, making a TV series on the ancient culture in the eighties, called it *L'Héritage de la chouette*, *The owl's legacy*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It featured, among others, Iannis Xenakis, George Steiner, Elia Kazan, Theo Angelopoulos, Cornelius Castoriadis etc. The entire Greek legacy can be put under the emblem of the owl.

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But Athena was also the goddess of courage, purity, learning, civilization, law and justice, mathematics, strength, war strategy, arts and crafts. Here are some of her features: she was always depicted in full armor, with the shield, the helmet, the spear, in the outfit of a warrior ready for battle, apart from the somewhat incongruous owl that rather looked like a peculiar pet. She was also the virgin goddess, never entering into the sexual circulation and transgression so common among Greek gods. Not that she was immune to feminine vanity about her beauty – the judgment of Paris, which famously instigated the Trojan war, concerned a beauty contest among three goddesses, Hera, Athena and Aphrodite, and Athena, with her virginity and wisdom, was ultimately no match for Aphrodite, the goddess of love, with the trumpcard of the beautiful Helen up her sleeve. Another story tells about Tiresias who stumbled upon Athena bathing, and he was struck blind by her to ensure he would never again see what man was not allowed to see. (Don't look at naked goddesses if you can help it, another Greek wisdom to be heeded, this will finish badly, as other Greek myths testify – cf. Diana and Actaeon.)<sup>2</sup> But having lost his eyesight, Tiresias was given a special gift – to be able to understand the language of birds and thus to foretell the future. Birds and wisdom hang together, one has to understand the bird language to acquire wisdom, and Athena always had a special relation to birds. Yet another story is told of Athena's birth – she was not born of a woman, she famously sprang out of Zeus's head, already in full armor and splendor, with all her attributes, and one wonders about the owl. Was it there already at birth? – Significantly, being born in full-blown shape and outfit, she has never been a child. She was already born 'beyond Oedipus', thus by-passing the oedipal initiation to philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

I am listing these haphazard various sides of Athena (Minerva), the patroness of philosophy, to remind us of the strange and incongruous context that presided over the birth of philosophy, the imagery with which it was intertwined. The warrior, the crafty war strategist, virginity, the austere feminine beauty, the owl, blindness and insight, wisdom, the springing out of the head, as if she were an idea which materialized, a man's idea

2 Is truth a woman, as Nietzsche maintained in the beginning of *Beyond good and evil* (Nietzsche 1981/II: 9)? A naked woman? Is the condition of acquiring wisdom to be blinded by a naked woman and thus to direct one's gaze to the naked truth? Or is the propensity to deal with naked truth born of the philosophical ineptitude to deal with women?

3 Cf. Goux (1994), who forcefully argued that Oedipus was the key to the inception of philosophy.

(an idea of a macho God?).<sup>4</sup> One is bemused and puzzled with the plot that brings all these together. One cannot simply leave this aside and claim that philosophy, with its abstraction, ideality and conceptuality, has nothing to do with this mythical mess. But what would philosophy be without its imagery, without its bestiary, which constantly accompanied its rarefied abstractions as a counterpoint, a counterpart to concepts, their necessary and incongruous flipside, both incompatible with them and mandatory? Philosophy constantly secretly needed its mythical other in order to be philosophy at all. As the heroic narrative goes, philosophy started its career by disentangling itself from myth, by cutting the umbilical cord with the supposed archaic mythical kind of wisdom, leaving it behind, proposing and implementing logos instead of mythos, but the puzzling part is how philosophy nevertheless kept reproducing its mythical other in its own bosom, with the imagery and the bestiary that underpinned its elevated conceptual moves. Witness the owl. One easy, too easy, way would be to understand this as the return of the repressed, the mythical substratum tended to revenge itself by popping up in the midst of pure theory that tried to do away with it but never quite managed (cf. all the myths flooding Plato's philosophy, something he could never do without), constantly reproducing it in ever new versions. The umbilical cord, so it seems, was never quite cut so that logos always had to strike a secret alliance with the powers of the myth that it rejected but which provided some blood to its anemic concepts, the fuel to its ideas, providing the imaginary sway to what cannot be imagined at all, namely pure concepts. Could one say – the myth without logos is blind while the logos without myth is empty?

A spectacular version of this argument is presented by Adorno's and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of enlightenment* (2007, reputedly a 'mythical' book, given the history of its production and publication). Dramatically, the elevation of reason over myth and nature came with a price: reason, in its endeavor of enlightenment, kept unwittingly reproducing its other, its opposite, which took revenge – this is the basic script of dialectic of any enlightenment, the proposed grand historical narrative: nature, and myth, from which reason tried to extricate itself, always forced its return in forms that reason couldn't master. The suppressed myth, the suppressed nature,

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4 A Christian apologist from the 2nd century, Justin Martyr, curiously interpreted the birth of Athena from the Zeus's head as the birth of logos from which the world is to be created: "They said that Athena was the daughter of Zeus not from intercourse, but when the god had in mind the making of a world through a word (logos) his first thought was Athena." (Justin Martyr 1999, *Apology* 64.5) From Athena to St. John's Gospel *il n'y qu'un pas*. In the beginning there was logos, the word, the happy invention of a God, be it as the logos become flesh of a virgin.

revenge themselves on reason which pretends to be master over them, but which is unwittingly prey to what it has seemingly suppressed and done away with.

Another account could see this as the question of metaphoricity, the metaphorical usage of myths in deploying philosophy's own agenda, be it as the reduced reference to the owl of Minerva. The concepts had to recur to the help of analogy to purvey their message, with metaphors providing so many handy analogies inscribed in the cultural background heavily interwoven with mythical remnants. Is there such a thing as a mere concept without some metaphorical crutch? And is there such a thing as an innocent metaphor, a mere metaphor? Derrida's "White mythology" (in Derrida 1984), the myth that there could be a philosophical language without a myth, the invisible myth subtending the alleged universality of logos, epitomizes this second line of argument.

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If the owl of Minerva is a metaphor, then a metaphor of what exactly and by what analogy? By recurring to analogy one always subscribes to more than one catered for, there has never been nor can there be a pure philosophical language that could stand on its own and proceed by its means alone. The idea of such a language has instituted the very realm of logic as an artificial formal language which has severed its ties with the ordinary language and all imagery, the pure letter with no owls flipping their wings, set free from the treacherous duplicity and ambiguity that is the fate of any language – but isn't this the ultimate fantasy? We must recall that Athena was, among other things, also the goddess of mathematics, thus a strange condensation of the two, the owl and the letter.

But if both these options fall short of what is at stake, neither the return of the repressed nor the endless metaphoricity – is there a third option? The animality, the bestiary which recurs in the midst of philosophy but which cannot be quite reduced either to the resurgence of a mythical remnant nor to mere metaphor? What could be its status? This is like philosophy's inherent totemism, where the owl would figure as the totem of our clan and we are called upon to pay tribute to our totemic ancestor. What is the owl of Minerva the name of? *De quoi la chouette est-elle le nom* (to speak with Badiou)? What is it the harbinger of?

In his dialogue *Cratylus* Plato deals extensively with names and naming, with the foundation of names *in re*, in the things they name, evoking the mythological name-giver who has originally named things by names that befit them. Athena is, by the fanciful etymology, reduced to wisdom, the



divine wisdom as the core of her being, her name allegedly stemming from "divine intelligence" (*theou noesis*), "she who has the mind of God" (*a theonoa*), "she who knows divine things" (*ta theia noousa*) (407b, cf. Plato 1997). This would be the way that her name spells out her essence, the mythical umbilical cord that attaches names to things.<sup>5</sup> But as opposed to her name her depictions couldn't disguise her animal other nature: in many early renderings she had features of a snake (also one of her attributes) and of a bird, she was often depicted with wings (in black-figure vase pottery). Where does the owl stem from? As one theory would have it, Athena, once she became the goddess of wisdom, shed away her animal forms which were then isolated and reduced to her external attributes (cf. Gimbutas 1999). Having once been a part-owl herself, she was then equipped with an owl, so that her bird-like traits were turned into her animal companion. The owl would thus be the stand-in of the animal features that the goddess once possessed herself and which she has shaken off and cast away if she was to become the goddess of wisdom. Hence the owl would not be the emblem of philosophy at all, but rather the stand-in for the other of philosophy, for what philosophy cannot quite encompass in its conceptual web, the beast within the concept, the stand-in for her suppressed winged habitus, for her shed-off animality.<sup>6</sup>

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Yet, within the animal kingdom the owl was also seen as particularly apt for this stand-in, being endowed with features conducive to wisdom: in particular, the owl can see at night, through the dark, its gaze reaches further than the common sight, it sees what we cannot, and so philosophy should see clear in the darkness of our common opinions and misconceptions. Furthermore, the owl fixes its gaze, it stares unperturbed and motionless, it doesn't deflect its stare, it looks at things as if through things, steadily, fixedly, without flinching an eye, without recoiling. It is the epitome of what philosophical speculation should be (speculation from *speculor*, to watch intensely, to observe, to explore, to examine): to stare undauntedly where the others look away. Then again, the owl is a bird of

5 As names go, Plato's elder brother was called Glaucon, which can be rendered as owl-like, owl-eyed, from *glauux*, the little owl. Glaucon was not just anybody, he was the main interlocutor of Socrates in the *Republic*, as if Socrates needed an owl-like sparring partner to develop his theories of state and justice.

6 In Christian iconography the four evangelists are commonly depicted with their symbols or attributes: Matthew with an angel, Mark with a lion, Luke with an ox, John with an eagle. The common feature that immediately strikes the eye is that all these creatures are presented as winged, not only the angel and the eagle, but also the winged lion (the symbol of Venice) and the winged ox. Apart from that there is the Holy ghost which is a dove. One has to have wings to rise above the earthly? Is philosophy a winged knowledge, carried on owl's wings?

prey, a rapacious creature which mercilessly devours its prey, a ferocious predator. Its calm fixity and stone-like steadiness is but a ploy, a deceptive mask, for it is only waiting to seize the propitious moment and to swiftly move into action, unexpectedly, to dismember and tear apart what it has calmly observed with its fixed gaze in seemingly reflective speculation. Its speculation was but a preparation for action. A perfect image of philosophy, the philosophical bird par excellence? Seeing in darkness, the steady gaze, the ruthless capture. Speculation and assault, speculation on the verge of attack, speculation and destruction, speculation and annihilation – maybe, as metaphors and analogies go, this is not a bad one.<sup>7</sup>

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This was not what Hegel had in mind when he brought up this image of the owl of Minerva, in probably the most famous spot in all his philosophy, the one to have turned into proverb. At least it doesn't seem so on the face of it. The most famous spot appears also to be the most damaging one, so apt for a quick wholesale indictment of the Hegelian enterprise as such. For what seems to follow from it amounts to resignation and reconciliation, Hegel acquiescing to the world such as it is. Here is the incriminating passage:

One more word about *teaching* what the world ought to be: Philosophy always arrives too late to do any such teaching. As the *thought* of the world, philosophy appears only in the period after actuality has been achieved and has completed its formative process. The lesson of the concept, which necessarily is also taught by history, is that only in the ripeness of actuality does the ideal appear over against the real [*dem Realen*], and that only then does this ideal comprehend this same real world in its substance and build it up for itself into the configuration of an intellectual realm. When philosophy paints its gray in gray, then a configuration of life has grown old, and cannot be

7 Another dimension can be mentioned in passing. Athena being the patroness of Athens, she was duly depicted on coins, engraved on one side of tetradrachms, the silver coins which on the other side featured the owl as her emblem. There is not only the streak of wisdom, but that of currency and economy (trading in owl currency?). Hence the common expression 'to bring owls to Athens', originally meaning that it was unnecessary to bring money to Athens since Athenians coined their own currency, so this is an expression for something futile or superfluous. In a curious echo there is a microscopic owl depicted on the one dollar bill, on the upper right hand corner of its 'Washington' side, and one needs a serious magnifying glass to detect it. Its origin may have some connection with the secret societies of initiate knowledge, Illuminati, freemasonry etc., with which the American founding fathers were involved and which prominently heralded the owl as the symbol. Don't try to decipher its meaning on the net, it's swarming with conspiracy theories and suppositions of occult messages, though it's curious that the alleged counterfeit protection would yield so many tiny details whose meaning can go in all directions. Apart from a currency unit it's also like the unit of the 'currency of meaning': it means that it means, it symbolizes that it symbolizes, while the meaning runs wild and escapes.

rejuvenated by this gray in gray, but only known [*nur erkennen*]; the Owl of Minerva takes flight only as the dusk begins to fall. (Hegel 1986, 7: 27–8; hereinafter translation mine)<sup>8</sup>

It's too late, it's always already too late, philosophy is doomed to come too late, structurally it is lagging behind, it comes too late to teach the world how it ought to be, the world is already there in its formation, philosophy can only understand/know the world such as it already is, it can seize it by knowledge and cognition (*erkennen*). And to add insult to injury, with a further and specifically Hegelian twist, the world such as it is is already the embodiment of reason, the actuality and actualization of reason, so in order to know it by reason one has to come to a match: reason on the part of the knowing subject must find its match in the reason already embodied and actualized in the world. Thus reason inhabits both the subjective and objective part, and the two should find reconciliation, *Versöhnung*, in their overlap. Philosophy arrives *post festum*, literally after the feast, but what it has been looking for, the realm of reason, is miraculously already there, in a strange loop, it can know the feast without partaking in it. Hegel spells out this supposedly happy match, this overlap of the two, in the famous quote:

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Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich;  
und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig. (Hegel 1986, 7, 24)  
What is rational is actual;  
and what is actual is rational.

One thing to be noted is the punctuation and spacing: the adage appears not in the running text, but in a separate paragraph, actually two lines set apart from the text, like a two-liner, a poem, a distich, two verses, consciously and ostentatiously put in a form of a slogan. It runs two syllables over a haiku (19 vs. 17), still one is tempted to put it in a haiku form:

Was vernünftig ist,  
das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist,  
das ist vernünftig.

8 Here is the original: "Um noch über *das Belehren*, wie die Welt sein soll, ein Wort zu sagen, so kommt dazu ohnehin die Philosophie immer zu spät. Als der *Gedanke* der Welt erscheint sie erst in der Zeit, nachdem die Wirklichkeit ihren Bildungsprozeß vollendet und sich fertig gemacht hat. Dies, was der Begriff lehrt, zeigt notwendig ebenso die Geschichte, daß erst in der Reife der Wirklichkeit das Ideale dem Realen gegenüber erscheint und jenes sich dieselbe Welt, in ihrer Substanz erfaßt, in Gestalt eines intellektuellen Reichs erbaut. Wenn die Philosophie ihr Grau in Grau malt, dann ist eine Gestalt des Lebens alt geworden, und mit Grau in Grau läßt sie sich nicht verjüngen, sondern nur erkennen; die Eule der Minerva beginnt erst mit der einbrechenden Dämmerung ihren Flug."

What is the meaning and the impact of this strange spacing? Hegel suddenly turned poet? Putting the adage in a verse-like form, the burst of poetry in the middle of prose?<sup>9</sup> It's like a break in the midst of the 'normally' conducted argument, the cut in the prose of philosophical development, giving these two lines a status of a dogma-like pronouncement beyond argument.

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What is rational, what is actual, what is the common ground that enables the equation of the two? The equation seems to have the same structure as Hegel's notorious infinite judgment, equating two entities that have no common measure and are equated precisely on the basis of their incommensurability, famously 'the spirit is a bone', where the common ground is precisely the absence of a common ground, and its very absence is transformed into a lever, the infinity opening up in the unbridgeable abyss between the two, yet the unbridgeable which is bridged by the judgment. This equation of the rational and the actual has ultimately the same structure, although its tenet is seemingly different, even opposite, namely that of a tautology, but which nevertheless equates two incommensurate entities – then again, this is perhaps what every tautology does under the guise of self-evidence. Couldn't one say that Hegel reads tautology, the proposition of identity, precisely as an infinite judgment, introducing an abyss where everyone else saw a self-evident smooth passage? Isn't  $A=A$  also a paradigmatic case of an infinite judgment? Opening an abyss in the midst of the same and bridging the abyss of the radically heterogeneous – aren't these two opposed forms part and parcel of the same move, two sides of the same Hegelian coin?

Let me take two digressions. The first one is anecdotic and stems from Heinrich Heine. Heine came to study in Berlin in 1820, precisely at the time of the composition of this text, and he was assiduously following Hegel's lectures, so this is a first-hand account.

I often saw how he anxiously looked around, fearing that people would understand him [*aus Furcht, man verstünde ihn*]. He liked me a lot since he was certain I wouldn't betray him; I even thought at the time that he was servile. When I was once uneasy about the saying 'all that is, is rational', he smiled in a peculiar way and remarked: 'This could also read 'all that is rational must be' [*es könnte auch heißen:*

9 The spacing is actually in line with two other passages in the same text, the Goethe quote from Faust (actually a misquote, the same misquote Hegel committed already in the *Phenomenology*), and the adage *Hic Rhodus, hic saltus*, taken from Aesop and given in the Greek original, in Latin version and in Hegel's own 'poetic license' rendering, 'Here the rose, here you should dance'. The spacing is not neutral, it singles out Hegel's own attempt at a striking distich, on the par with Goethe and the ancient proverb.

'Alles, was vernünftig ist, muß sein.']. He quickly looked around, but soon calmed down.<sup>10</sup>

The quote is great. First it gives us a view of Hegel as someone who is not at all complacent with the ambient political order, but someone who must constantly attempt to hide his subversive underside. His fear was that people would understand him all too well, not at all that his teaching was too difficult and obscure for students to grasp. (One has to keep in mind that at the time the lectures were held under the heavy shadow of the Carlsbad decrees which imposed harsh censorship, so this was no imaginary fear.)<sup>11</sup> But he liked Heine as someone who wouldn't betray him, so he could confide in him the esoteric message hidden in the exoteric version, within the seeming endorsement of what exists by the mere virtue of existing – namely the coded message that what is rational must be, *muss sein*. But he quickly looked around fearing that he might be overheard, this was for Heine's ears only. Although the anecdote might be apocryphal (Heine put it down a quarter of a century later), it actually has a textual basis in Hegel himself. The first manuscript versions of this sentence (in his lecture notes some years earlier) read: "Was vernünftig ist, muss geschehen", 'what is rational must happen' (Hegel 1992: 192), and later "Das wirkliche wird vernünftig und das Vernünftige wird wirklich", 'the actual becomes rational and the rational becomes actual'. The two formulations introduce two elements that are implicit in the famous adage: first, the tension between 'is' and 'ought', between what there is and what there should be, present also in the Heine testimony. This is like the Kantian division into *Sein* and *Sollen*, but condensed in the same spot, inextricably, infusing an inherent tension into every 'is' – nothing 'is' independently of what it should be. So as not to get entangled in the Kantian alternative between 'is' and 'ought', one may propose the simple didactical device that Lacan was so fond of, the intersection of two circles. What Hegel aims at is neither the realm of what is nor the realm of what ought to be, but the point where the two circles of 'is' and 'ought' intersect and overlap, the intersection which secretly underpins both, connects them and separates them. Shall one say, using Kant against Kant, that 'ought' without 'is' is empty while 'is' without 'ought' is blind? And second, there is the dimension of becoming, *Werden*, which makes it impossible to read any 'is' at its face value. To be

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10 Heine, *Briefe über Deutschland* 1844/45, in Heine 1976, V: 197.

11 "While the censor might be glad to discover that Herr Professor Hegel sanctifies everything that exists with the halo of reason, the philosophical savant will easily comprehend that not everything that exists is rational by its mere existence – since it is not yet actual." (Yovel 1996: 39)

is to become, to be caught in becoming. Reason is 'becoming rational' and actuality is 'becoming actual', to use the Deleuzian parlance.

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The second detour is through Marx. Thesis Eleven on Feuerbach famously runs: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point [however] is to change it." The pronouncement can be seen in the maximal opposition to Hegel's owl of Minerva, its direct counterpart, its polemical twin. "Theses on Feuerbach" were written by Marx in 1845, as a brief scribbled addition to the large manuscript of the *German ideology*, actually at the time when Marx was in friendly communication with the same Heine in Paris, Heine being the literal embodiment of the intersection between Hegel and Marx, a person to have known and been close to both, the intersection of two circles. "Theses on Feuerbach" were first published by Engels only in 1888, after Marx's death, and soon turned into an epitome of Marxism, its shortest and most succinct statement – not something that Marx would ever imagine or condone and he would certainly be very surprised. Thesis Eleven gained the status of an icon. In a strange historic condensation it is carved in stone at the entrance of Humboldt University, precisely the Hegel's university, Marx's adage literally coming to supplant Hegel's on the same spot, but in a supreme stroke of historic irony it was carved in marble in 1953 by SED, the East German Communist Party. Stalinists always loved that slogan, for for them it read 'don't think and reflect, but act'. In that reading the thesis seems to promote a depreciation of thought in general and philosophy in particular, as being secondary, of a lesser reality, confined to impotent interpretation.<sup>12</sup>

One can ask a simple question: which philosophers have merely interpreted the world? There were none. In ancient times such division between theory and practice didn't apply. Philosophy was there to teach how to live a just and happy life – unless it could be translated in 'practical advice', the ways to change one's life, it was considered to have no worth (Cf. a great testimony to this, Pierre Hadot (1995), *Philosophy as a way of life*). Both Plato and Aristotle were grand political philosophers in a narrower sense, proposing an overarching agenda of political reform, for better or worse. They certainly didn't merely interpret Greek polis. In Christianity, to make it quick, Augustine and Aquinas were the knights of faith, certainly very much out to change the world. Giordano Bruno finished burned up at

12 Thesis eleven did a lot of damage, it seems to promulgate an anti-intellectual stance and resentment (intellectuals endlessly interpret and quibble over interpretations, instead of engaging in change and practice). This still has drastic resonances in today's leftist movements where the anti-theory stance is doing well in many quarters.

stake. Spinoza, who may seem more remote from worldly concerns, risked his life while writing the graffiti (*Ultimi barbarorum*) and wrote one of the most explosive books of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (*Tractatus theologico-politicus*), a rational critique of the Bible. The enlightenment philosophers paved the way for the revolution. Where is a single interpreter of the world in the entire history of philosophy? Philosophy was always done in view of changing the world, the idea of mere interpretation, if such a thing exists, never crossed anybody's mind. Not that the world would have necessarily been a better place if one heeded their advice (think of Plato-Dion-tyranny, up to the philosopher Stalin), but one certainly cannot reproach them for the lack of trying. Hence the provocation that Slavoj Žižek loves to make in his lectures: philosophers were always trying to change the world, let us finally interpret it properly, this will maybe make a change; rush to action is more often than not an acting out, a flight from a conceptual deadlock that only 'theory' can tackle.<sup>13</sup>

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Given that there were no philosophers who ever wanted something as innocent as merely interpreting the world, against whom is then Marx's sentence directed? One could propose that there was only one who ever maintained such a thing: namely Hegel on this particular spot of the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*. The owl of Minerva would be the very epitome of philosophy which always comes too late and can merely interpret (*nur erkennen*, says Hegel, but knowledge is precisely not interpretation). So Marx's adage is directed not against the rule but against the exception. And what an exception it is! There is a sort of crux, a straight line that connects these two most famous adages, on the one hand mere knowing, mere interpretation, always already too late, philosophy to be practiced at dusk when the day is over, and on the other the call to change, transformation, revolution, philosophy to be practiced at dawn, at the day-break. Hegel's quip poses two 'empirical' questions: when is the proper

13 Apart from this empirical or a bit commonsensical objection, there is also a more serious one pertaining to the very notion of interpretation. Marx's sentence implies a rather weak or impoverished notion of interpretation, an innocent interpretation that would leave the interpreted thing unaffected. Interpretation is always intervention, there is always a violence of interpretation, both justice and injustice – and one should also keep in mind the productivity of wrong interpretations abounding in history of philosophy. This doesn't go merely for textual interpretation, but also for various ways of interpreting 'reality': ideology is precisely a spontaneous self-evident interpretation which presents itself as non-interpretation, a view of how things really are. Maybe a minimal definition of ideology would be: this is not an interpretation. If philosophers have indeed interpreted the world, this is not such a small feat, for interpretation has the power to displace the very parameters in which the world presents itself to us and is thus not at all at odds with change, it is its precondition and rather coincides with it.

time to practice philosophy? Evening? Night? Dawn? Morning? Nietzsche's answer, to cut this Gordian knot, was to propose the noon, high noon: "Um Mittag wars, da wurde Eins zu Zwei", (Nietzsche 1981, 2: 173), 'It was at noon that one split into two'. And the second question, what is the proper philosophical bird, its adequate totem? Marx opposed Hegel's owl to the French rooster, *le coq gallois*, the French national symbol and the emblem of the French revolution, the morning bird, announcing the dawn. Nietzsche, yet again, wouldn't be confined to this choice, he proposed a whole zoo, lion, eagle, camel, snake etc. (Deleuze, who wouldn't lag behind, proposed the tic, the animal that sticks to the surface.) The question of the philosophical bestiary is a convoluted one.

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Marx himself, by the way, despite the incautious wording, didn't have such a poor opinion of philosophy so as to simply oppose philosophy as interpretation to change and action. Philosophy is part of the world, it should become aware of its attachment to the world and work against the world it is part of. There is never a simple situation where thought would stand at the opposite end to the world. There is a materiality of thought for Marx as well, and Marx's project was after all how to hold on to the legacy of German idealism of which he was a heir, and how to link this tremendous legacy to the social forces that can realize its emancipatory potential. But he tended to see this as an alternative between 'is' and 'ought', placing Hegel on the side of reason that already is, and placing change and revolution on the side of what ought to be. Marcuse's *Reason and revolution* (1999, first published in 1941) is an elaborate development of this idea. But as already indicated, Hegel is not to be squeezed into this alternative, he aims precisely at the intersection of the two circles of interpretation and action, the point where thought is both interpretation (actually knowledge, *erkennen*) and action 'in one'.<sup>14</sup>

Now to proceed in a more sober and scholarly (not to say scholastic) manner, I can give some brief indications about the notions that are used in this famous quote: reason, actuality, belatedness, gray on gray, finally the owl.

First, reason, *Vernunft*, is to be put in stark opposition to understanding, *Verstand*. *Verstand* presupposes and assumes a division into subject and

14 These remarks have no ambition of being a proper exegesis of Thesis Eleven. For a far more elaborate and exhaustive account cf. Frank Ruda (2015). Based on Ruda's elaboration of the history of the early Hegel reception, one could propose a simple line of division: the 'old-Hegelians' read Hegel's adage on the side of 'is' and the 'young-Hegelians' on the side of 'ought', and these parallax readings were at the bottom of their dispute. In the reading proposed here this is precisely not a parallax.



object, where subject tries to understand, to grasp by its conceptual means the world out there which stands opposed to it as its other, cut of a different stuff than it. We enter the realm of reason when no such division applies: reason is neither subjective nor objective, what it has to deal with is its own other, its own inner split. Hegel was absolutely clear about this already in the *Phenomenology*: "Reason is the certainty of consciousness that it is all reality. ... it is certain that it is itself reality, or that everything actual is none other than itself; its thinking is directly actuality ..." (1977: 140, 139) The split into world and thought is the internal split of reason, not an external opposition. This is why I proposed earlier that Hegel's dictum is actually a tautology, since reason by definition implies actuality of thought ('thinking is directly actuality', "sein Denken ist unmittelbar selbst die Wirklichkeit", 1986, 3: 179), not thought as something subjective that should be applied to external objectivity. The disparity between subject and object, thought and world, is the inherent disparity of reason itself. 'Is' in 'rational is actual' is premised on this disparity, on the gap which it both bridges and holds apart.

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Second, actuality, *Wirklichkeit*, is no *passe-partout* word that would indiscriminately encompass objectivity, world, reality, being, existence etc. Hegel is extremely careful to distinguish *Sein*, *Dasein*, *Realität*, *Existenz*, *Wirklichkeit*, *Objektivität* etc. So as not to get lost in convoluted exegesis of Hegelian terms, one can just take up the opposition between existence and actuality. Existence is treated by Hegel in the realm of phenomenon, *Erscheinung*, it is what phenomenally is, and what phenomenally is is appearance, the manifestation of a supposed beyond that would be its rational essence. We enter the realm of actuality (which is the next chapter in *Logic* after the phenomenon, actuality is precisely not a phenomenon) when no such duality applies: the beyond is directly manifested on the surface, mediated by it: the disparity between the two is the inner disparity, the rational essence is nothing else but the way that the surface is at odds with itself, the way it is its own beyond (cf. Yovel 1996: 33). Hence, philosophy can never simply teach the world how it ought to be, that is, to extricate the rational essence and impose it on existence. This has traditionally been philosophy's delusion of grandeur, there was no lack of it, to dispense recipes how the world should be according to reason, and to feel slighted if the world didn't want to oblige and comply. We have such good ideas but people are too stupid to get them. This is for Hegel precisely not to take the actuality of thought seriously.

Third, belatedness, always coming too late, is not a handicap to be deplored and bemoaned. In Hegel's philosophy one always comes too late,

or rather, one has the necessary illusion of coming too late. The thing was there, in itself, in its splendor, in its full magnificence, inexhaustible in its richness, in its immediacy, in its unrestrained indeterminacy, but once we come we miss it, we lose it, we impoverish it, reduce it, distort it, we are alas too late to get hold of its immediate splendor. In sense certainty, the beginning of the *Phenomenology*, we are immersed in the wealth and the splendor of the multi-faceted inexhaustible sensible being, the colorful sensuality and perception, but the moment we try to spell it out, it's gone. In *Logic*, we start with the pure indeterminate immediacy of being, but the moment we try to get hold of it it turns into nothing, it evaporates. But this temporal sequence is an illusion, a necessary structural illusion: actually what comes after constitutes what seemingly went before. Missing it retroactively creates what was missed. One loses what one never possessed. By coming too late one creates the right time to come, which wasn't there before. It is the fall which retroactively creates the paradise from which we have fallen and which seemingly preceded it (which is Hegel's reading of Genesis). Or to use the title of Žižek's book, *Absolute recoil*, and his line on it: "Hegel uses the unique term '*absoluter Gegenstoss*' (recoil, counter-push, counter-thrust ... counter-punch): a withdrawal that creates what it withdraws from." (Žižek 2014:148) The recoil retroactively brings forth what it recoils from – this is the main argument of his book. Thus in this light philosophy coming too late once that actuality is already seemingly accomplished is not simply the sign of its impotence – this belatedness is endowed with the retroactive power of bringing forth the actuality which was not yet simply there, despite its air of completion. It has the power of changing the very condition of an accomplished actuality, which is actual only by virtue of us coming too late and thus producing what seemed to be already there and accomplished. Coming too late produces the very conditions in relation to which it came too late, by coming too late philosophy can construct and anticipate. Nothing ever simply is.

Fourth, gray on gray. The quote poses not only the questions of what is the proper time of the day for philosophy and what is the philosophical bird/animal, but also the question of the proper color of philosophy. Trooping the color, as the English phrase goes, naming a grand military ceremony – but which color shall we troop? No doubt the choice of color is a quote, stemming from *Faust*: "Grau, teurer Freund, ist alle Theorie, / Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum." 'Gray, my dear friend, is all theory, and green is the golden tree of life.' (Marx's version in a letter to Engels runs: 'Gray, my dear friend, is all theory, and only business is green'.) These words are put into Mephisto's mouth, the devil enticing the poor

Faust away from the dull philosophy to the supposed full enjoyment of colorful life (which was bound to finish badly, and Hegel has a great reading of this). Gray is not a color of life, it is a non-color, the discolored, dilapidated color, the indifferent mixture of all colors, the color of non-difference. It doesn't even have the appeal of the absence of color, which is white. So gray on gray is the difference of the indifferent, the minimal difference, the pure cut, the pure break. Not fifty shades of gray, just two shades of gray are enough. And since philosophy's time is at dusk, i.e. at the vintage moment of grayness, the indifference between day and night, the moment of transition and transience, it is to be matched by another moment of twilight, the moment of dawn, the transition in the opposite direction. So maybe gray on gray should be read in this way: the gray of dawn on the gray of dusk, the minimal difference between two transitions.<sup>15</sup> Evening is indiscernible from morning, there is just the cut of their minimal difference, a hair-breadth. – Hegel may be seen to anticipate Malevitch, who, in order to be a proper Hegelian, should have painted a gray square on a gray surface. And also anticipating Beckett – to take just one quote: “Traces fouillis signes sans sens gris pâle presque blanc sur blanc.” (Beckett 1992: 62) “Muddled traces signs without sense pale grey almost white on white.” Pale gray almost white on white: this is an even more dilapidated version of Hegel's gray. There is the anticipation of Beckett also in a wider sense, in a very fundamental turn or figure of thought: everything is already finished, it's over, we come too late, always already too late – this is the initial situation of almost all Beckett's texts, this is where they begin: to turn this end into a beginning, a process, a persistence, this may be seen as Beckett's way to assume Hegel's legacy.

And finally the owl of Minerva, the philosophical bird par excellence, the bird of dusk, the beast within the concept, the bird which can see through the dark, the bird of fixed stare and speculation, the bird of prey, the bird of speculation that suddenly springs into action, speculation and annihilation – maybe the owl is the harbinger (and the name) of this minimal difference, the gap, the break, perched on the thin line between belatedness and retroaction, knowledge and action, interpretation and change, the 'is' and the 'ought', the thin line between reason and actuality in their apparent tautology/disparity.

15 Cf. Comay 2011: 143: “The doubling of gray on gray marks the almost indiscernible interval between dusk and dawn, between one twilight and another ... Turning evening into morning ...” For some insights in this paper I am profoundly indebted to Rebecca Comay's book. Cf. Cutrofello's wonderful sequel to the *Phenomenology*, *The owl at dawn* (1995).

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## Mladen Dolar

Minervina sova od sumraka do svitanja, ili Dve nijanse sive

## Rezime

Tekst uzima kao polaznu tačku figuru sove kao amblem filozofije, gleda na njenu istoriju i razmatra njenu najznačajniju filozofsku upotrebu, ozloglašeni pasus u kome Hegel koristi sovu kao indikator neophodnog kašnjenja filozofije. Ovo je pasus koji se obično uzima kao tačka optužnice Hegelovog položaja i uloge koju je pripisao filozofiji. Hegelova izreka: „Sve što je umno jeste stvarno, i sve što je stvarno, umno je“ stavljena je pod lupom u svojim različitim aspektima, posebno imajući u vidu njenu drugu verziju: „Ono što je umno mora postati stvarno.“ Tenzija između „je“ i „treba“ je možda ključ za razumevanje ove izreke, gde se Hegel ne odlučuje za jedno ili drugo već ima za cilj paradoksalni presek oba. Hegelova izreka je prema tome u suprotnosti sa Marksovom jedanaestom tezom.

Tekst tako razmatra koncepte umnog, stvarnog, kašnjenje/retroakciju, sivilo i konačno sovu (i ulogu koju bestijalnost igra u filozofiji), pokušavajući na taj način da opiše zadatak koji je dodeljen filozofiji.

**Ključne reči:** Hegel, Minervina sova, um, stvarnost, retroakcija, Hajne, Marks

Valery Savchuk

## How is a Philosophy of Photography Possible?

**Abstract** *This paper focuses on the following question: how is philosophy of anything possible? Where lies the boundary of specialisation area beyond which the term “philosophy” loses not only its strength, but also its meaning? When we talk about specific genre, for example, graphic art or sculpture we use the term “philosophy” in a broader, metaphorical sense. Why then should philosophy of photography be any different? All of the abovementioned questions are discussed in the present article. Philosophy of photography is, indeed, a legitimate discipline, just as philosophy of language, philosophy of science and technology and philosophy of politics are.*

**Keywords:** *Photography, visual image, iconic turn, language of media*

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*Der Menschen waren nie Herren der Bilder*  
Dietmar Kamper

I ask myself: how is a ‘philosophy of something’ possible? Where is the boundary of an area of specialisation beyond which the term ‘philosophy’ begins to lose not only its strength, but also its meaning? Indeed, in what other way, save for a lack of meaning, or – what is worse – a lack of taste, can one explain such phrases as ‘the philosophy of agriculture’, the ‘philosophy of a company’, or ‘the philosophy of driving an automobile’? The high frequency with which the word ‘philosophy’ is used, for one, gives us reason to think not only that the boundaries of philosophy are re-defined with each new generation, but also that attraction modern marketing methods to the resources of philosophy. Secondly, in relation to art, regardless of the harsh criticism of Schlegel, who said that ‘one of two things is usually lacking in the so-called Philosophy of Art: either philosophy or art’ (Schlegel 1991: 12), the term ‘philosophy of art’ does not raise objections either from the intellectual or from the artistic communities. Perhaps, indeed, this has something to do with the list of respectable authors who have written books with that very title: Antonio Banfi, Vicente Cardoso, Hippolyte Taine, Broder Christiansen and, of course, the authoritative Schelling, as well as the existence of modules dealing with the subject in the teaching of aesthetics and the history and theory of art.

When the term ‘philosophy of art’ is used in respect to a particular medium, such as graphic art or sculpture, it is used in the same broad – that

is to say, incorrect – sense in which we can speak of the ‘philosophies’ respective to an automobile or a business concern, or even of the ‘philosophy’ of a magazine. Why, then, should the philosophy of photography be treated any differently? Why is it that earlier, when photography was still struggling to be accepted as a genre of visual art, the theoreticians of photography answered questions as to the secrets of photography under the heading of ‘ontology’ of photography, while now, when photography has gained acceptance, the ‘philosophy’ of photography is now in demand? One sign of the contemporary importance of this philosophy of photography is the ever-growing list of publications in which we find this very phrase. Could this all just be a sign of the loss of subtlety in our language that has followed the blurring of boundaries among the philosophical disciplines? Here I shall try to support the claim that the philosophy of photography is beginning to enter the group of such respectable and legitimate terms as the philosophy of language, science, technology, and politics. The greatest expression of this tendency is the term’s active use not only in the rubrics of courses in artistic theory, but also in the self-reflection of artists, critics, and curators.

It is quite possible that we must look for the reason for this tendency in the specific nature of the photographic medium, which has become a current question in the epoch which analysts call either the ‘civilisation of the image’ or the ‘iconic turn’. Let us direct our attention to the latter. The iconic turn is a shift in the socio-cultural situation, a transformation by which the problems of ontology become the analysis of visual images. This turn is in keeping with the ontological and linguistic turns, defining, as it does, the media producers’ abandonment of verbal communication for the visual (or, as Virilio might have said, the shift from the soft to the hard). However, the lordship of the new means of communication changes the *substance* of apprehension, which in the end leads to a change in our very *understanding* of reality. In the present day, the overproduction of visual images has reached such vast proportions that the criterion of our analysis of events has itself been reconstructed: that is, more and more we but our trust not in letters or words, but in visual images. The beginning of this tendency was first discovered in the thirties of the last century by Günter Anders, who saw within this tendency a ‘iconomania’, while the contemporary art theorist Gottfried Boehm would have us call it the ‘iconic turn’, in the manner of the ontological and linguistic turns of the past century.

Could one speak of such an ‘iconic turn’, and if so, in what manner? Is not the turn to the image made by theorists of media and philosophers

in their solving of contemporary problems tantamount to a decision to ignore language, which, according to Jean-François Lyotard had by 1980 already achieved a separate reality? As Lyotard writes,

[Even] scientific knowledge is a kind of discourse. And it is fair to say that for the last forty years the “leading” sciences and technologies have had to do with language: phonology and theories of linguistics, problems of communication and cybernetics, modern theories of algebra and informatics, computers and their languages, problems of translation and the search for areas of compatibility among computer languages, problems of information storage and data banks, telematics and the perfection of intelligent terminals, paradoxology. The facts speak for themselves (and this list is not exhaustive). (Lyotard, 1984: 3–4.)

And so, if the linguistic turn brought us to the understanding that all questions of philosophy are properly questions of language, the iconic turn means to show us the unique role that images are to play at the very heart of the formation of contemporary reality, that is, in both the ethico-political and economic parts of life.

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Now, when one can not only *reproduce* an image, but also *manipulate* it (at first this was made possible by photography, but today the new digital methods give us a hundred times more possibilities), the level of manipulation any visual document undergoes has greatly increased. The construction of an *objective*, impartial image or depiction has been deprived of its foundation, and the referent of the image comes under question. The idea of faithful and adequate reproduction has been displaced by the free choice of how to present the same reality: in such a way Heidegger’s *presentation* of reality gains its iconic development. We do not so much *interpret* what we see as we *see* that which we imagine. Reality acts as something like an archive, a warehouse, out of which we can take (or even make a special order for) that which we need for the production of images. ‘Give me an image, and I will turn the word upside down’ – such is the maxim which expresses the substance of the iconic turn in Western civilisation. To the figure of the intellectual controlling the minds of his contemporaries is added the figure of the ‘cultural’, who successfully makes his claim upon the possession – and mastery – of his spectators’ gaze.

Wittgenstein once said that ‘the image is the model of reality’, but today we are coming to see independent reality in the image itself. A multicultural and multi-level style of image production is the order of the day: in this context, the substance of the photographic image is one of the most important themes in new media. This is where the interests of philosophers

and art theorists, anthropologists and media theorists meet. A consensus has been more or less reached: the reality of the visual image, which in traditional societies had never been questioned, has in the modern era become a means of desacralising 'the reflection of reality' (photography was the first to produce this strong sense of illusion). In the postmodern era, the reality of the visual image does the very same, but with reality itself, which had once thought to be all-meaningful.

896 The interpretation of images has evolved, as well. If once the results of our *understanding* of the world in new European culture were made to correlate with our worldview, then the *depiction* of reality began to be associated with painting. The *attendant* meanings of the artistic image, however (that is, those which do not fall into the category of the graphic arts) were handed over to the non-graphic arts: to dance, to music, to poetry and suchlike, which do not so much as reflect the world as they *express the human situation*. Having absorbed into itself the myth born of the optiocentric perspective, the artistic worldview – one of the most important symbols of Western culture – was directly associated with painting. The completeness and changelessness of an artistic painting is an important construct of European self-identification, as well as a condition of its function in the capacity of a *chef-d'oeuvre*, that is, as a product whose value appreciates with each passing year. Let us ask ourselves: what feeds the idea of the untouchable status of a unique painting? Indeed, the documentation of events is a permanent feature of life, and we have the opportunity to *see accidental occurrences*, for example, we can watch an airplane crashing into a tower on 11 September 2001. The pictures of that explosion stand before our eyes, affecting us with such power as neither the author of a 'Guernica' nor the creators of the 'ROSTA Windows' propaganda posters could ever have dreamed.

In any possible conception of the present moment, visual images always take first place. The image has a history: according to H. M. McLuhan, with every event of historical importance, with every advance in technology there appear new epistemological metaphors that structure and control our ways of thinking, and Aristotle, in the first words of his 'Metaphysics' pointed out the fact that humans are naturally attracted to sense-impressions, taking delight in 'the sense of sight' 'above all others'. The printing revolution, beginning from Gutenberg's invention, not only scattered the political and physical body, having freed voices from the previous necessity of being physically present, but also caused a tense imbalance between the spoken and written word, with the following consolidation



of visual space as the dominant method of enculturation. As a result of this, the epoch of 'optiocentrism' has been born, in which 'presentation' plays a central role, characterising the 'worldview' of today. At the same time, the concepts 'look over' and 'see' come to be synonyms for 'investigate' and 'analyse'; the statement 'I see' becomes equivalent to 'I understand', 'I confirm', 'I agree'; and the word 'speculation', rather than characterising *being-as-opinion*, comes to mean being-as-truth, pointing to vision (as does the well-entrenched turn of phrase 'In this work/research is *reflected...*') and referring us to that knowledge, that form of cognition which can only be "seen" with one's mind, and yet, loving it as we do, can never 'look at' often enough.<sup>1</sup>

At the very source of today's dominance of the visual image lies the photograph. While the photograph – artistic, silvery, ever-analogous to something else – sympathetically 'suffers' from the situation which the it itself has created, still, its growth (we shall refrain from calling it 'mutation', as to do so would betray an evaluative tendency) responds to the actual state of affairs (for example, the expansion of new technologies) and, in the end, comes to grow into this very situation, filling the photographic image with digital contents.

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Let us now return to our original question: how is a philosophy of photography possible? For a start, let us attend to the demarcation between the subject areas of the theory and philosophy of art, the latter of which has been mostly associated with aesthetics. Wolfgang Iser, one of the editor-contributors of an anthology of art theory in which are included the various contributions of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Roman Ingarden, Nelson Goodman, and others, separated the two spheres of art theory and philosophy of art in the following way: Modern art theory is as different from philosophical aesthetics as aesthetics differed from the Aristotelian rules for poetics that it had replaced. If the poetics of Aristotle had been a sort of rulebook for the production of artworks, philosophical aesthetics aimed to gain knowledge of what is art. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, different forms of art had been compared in order to uncover their specific features, but philosophical aesthetics unites all forms of art into one Art. This Art had ceased to be understood as something that is made, and was dragged by philosophical aesthetics – itself created by the great philosophical systems – into the concept-world of epistemological ultimate foundations (*erkenntnistheoretischer Letztbegründung*). The different manifestations of philosophical aesthetics had a common premise, namely that art, as an appearance of the truth, is both

the representation of an ideal reality and a representation of the Whole. Such a view of art served to give reasons for seeing the philosophical system as a finished product. [...] This identification of art with aesthetics is being erased by modern theories of art. These theories – with the obvious exception of Marxism and metaphysical aesthetics – no longer see themselves as branches of philosophical systems (Iser 1992: 33–34).

Iser goes on to say that the defining characteristic of modern art theories is that they translate the work of art itself into a discourse; as a consequence of this, a work of art is only discussed under a certain aspect that is defined by an approach specific to the work .

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Once more having changed our point of reference, let us make note of the fact that while different theories of art – some of them relying upon phenomenology and hermeneutics, others, upon psychoanalysis and semiotics – *define* the specific characteristics of a particular artistic genre, philosophy rather *interrogates* a particular work of art, asking the question of how it is that through an *individual* (work of art) a *wholeness* comes into being, or how through the *given* (in the artwork) in space-time becomes *universal*: in short, philosophy asks how it is that now, in the present, we can find reasons for making an aesthetico-critical judgement. That is, philosophy enquires as to how, under certain conditions, the thought of the actual, the now, can come to be associated with the twin horizons of the past and the future; how an emerging genre of art solves the problems of art as art (or does not solve them – and so makes its exit from the stage of Art).

In relation to photography as a particular form of art, it would be proper to quote the opinion of one of the first philosophers of photography, Vilém Flusser, author of the book *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*: 'Any philosophy of photography will have to come to terms with the ahistorical, post-historical character of the phenomenon under consideration' (Flusser 2000: 77). Concerning photography's importance, he says that In the eighteenth century, a philosophy of the machine would simultaneously have been a criticism of the whole of anthropology, science, politics, and art, i.e. e. of mechanisation. It is no different in our time for a philosophy of photography: it would be a criticism of functionalism in all its anthropological, scientific, political, and aesthetic aspects. (Flusser 2000: 78)

In the history of photographic thought, art theorists have been more likely to look to philosophy than philosophers to have considered the

theme of photography. A striking example of this is Nietzsche, who is often invoked by theorists of photography in support of their various ideas and concepts (I would note that a mention of the 'philosopher by the hammer' is hardly ever out of place), but at the same time his musings about the nature of photography are nothing special, failing, as they do, to extend beyond the day-to-day uses of the word 'photography' as it was understood in his time.

And so, coming to the heart of the matter at hand – the philosophy of photography, or at the very least the context in which we could speak of such a particular philosophy – let us define a certain boundary, namely between philosophy *about* photography and the philosophy *of* photography. In the twentieth century, philosophers began to turn back the tide of opinion (which had held them as having ceased to understand how it is that art is created) by actively analysing particular works of art: paintings, poems, performances. Oddly enough, none of these endeavours prompted the appearance of philosophies of painting, poetry, and performance art. This is important: indeed, it is just as important as understanding that thought-about-being and the being-of-thought are only seen as the same by the very earliest philosophers – the Pre-Socratics – coming back only to glimmer slightly in the works of Heidegger. In all other cases, whenever we see these two different concepts (that thought-about-being and the being-of-thought) considered as one, we can count it a symptom of a non-reflexive, and thus of a non-philosophical, position.

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More often than not, we find not common sense, but past philosophy (now become prejudice) fighting in a battle with the philosophical position. Likewise, radical art is opposed not to life and its values, but rather to past forms of radicalism, which have been transformed into a sort of icon of the present day. With the entrance of the philosopher onto the scene comes an injection of *concepts* into the sphere of Life broadly defined, that is, into one of the very regions of discourse that, whether by the whim of history or the cunning of the World-Spirit, has come to be one of the most important areas under discussion.

The philosopher's conceptual accent legitimises the interests of the artists, while at the same time making the musings of the philosopher on art more up-to-date (the two may seem exclusive, but they are not). For example, if philosophy is 'forgetting' about science, then this is not due to the failing memory of philosophers, but rather speaks to the fact that the discoveries of science no longer find great resonance with the public.

Indeed, science is becoming more and more the sphere of application for the technical disciplines: science is no longer involved with questions of metaphysics. While the pragmatism of Western society has caused it to turn to the solution of moral problems arising around the problems relating to various scientific advancements, free will finds itself in different areas, and those interests not subsidised by grants are coming to find their philosophical identity in the analysis of visual art. And there is nothing surprising about the fact that after painting philosophers have come to deal with cinematic and photographic images, in a sense coming from the ‘*thinking-together*’ with Anaximander, Parmenides, or Heraclitus (as seen in the work of Heidegger) to the ‘*thinking-along-with*’ the cinema (as seen in Deleuze) or even to thinking-along-with photography. Just as his philosophical predecessor Thales thought along with the speculators on the olive-oil market (just in order to prove the attractiveness of useless pursuits), Deleuze proved that he could think along with the cinema in order that we might ask the following question, appropriate only to extreme youth or old age: ‘what is philosophy?’

I shall end this article with something entirely obvious – the philosophy of photography is not only a theoretical discipline, but also a love for the photographic image.

## Endnotes

1. *Translator’s note*: The final clause of this sentence is something of a play on words, which is difficult to reproduce; the original Russian phrase contains the words *nenaglyadnoe umozrenie*. ‘*Nenaglyadnoe*’ literally means ‘that upon which one can never become weary of looking’, and ‘*umozrenie*’ could be literally translated as ‘mind-seeing’, cognition. Both of these words fit in with the use of analogues for ‘seeing’ in sentences directly preceding the phrase.

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Valerij Savčuk

Kako je moguća filozofija fotografije?

Rezime

Članak se koncentriše na sledeće pitanje: kako je filozofija nečega moguća? Gde leže granice specijalizovanih područja iza kojih termin „filozofija“ gubi ne samo svoju snagu, već i svoje značenje? Kada se govori o nekom specifičnom žanru, recimo o grafičkoj umetnosti ili skulpturi, onda se termin „filozofija“ koristi u širem, metafotičkom smislu. Zašto to ne bi bilo primenjivo i na filozofiju fotografije? Ovaj članak razmatra navedene pitanja. Filozofija fotografije je legitimna disciplina, kao što su i filozofija jezika, filozofija nauke i tehnologije ili filozofija politike.

**Ključne reči:** fotografija, optička slika, slikovani preokret, jezik medija

Irina Deretić

## Why Does a Woman's Deliberative Faculty Have No Authority? Aristotle on the Political Role of Women

**Abstract** *In this paper I will discuss Aristotle's controversial philosophical views on women. I will critically examine three main interpretations of his claim that women have deliberative faculty "without authority". According to the first line of interpretation, Aristotle has in mind that women's incapacity of advice-giving and decision-making in public affairs are determined by conventions in the political context of his time. I will attempt to point out the disadvantages of this kind of interpretation. Furthermore, I will put forward the reasons why is implausible the more recent interpretation, given by Marguerite Deslauriers. According to her reading, the lack of authority of deliberative faculty in women means nothing else than the tasks over which women have authority are for the purpose of the tasks put forth by men. The prevailing interpretation among scholars is that, in Aristotle's view, women are naturally inferior to men, due to the fact that they are all too frequently overruled by the irrational "forces" of their nature. I will argue that this line of interpretation elucidates what Aristotle presumably has in mind, although it makes his account of women and their rationality, if not inconclusive, then indisputably problematic. In other words, I attempt to prove that, if the prevailing line of interpretation is correct, such view of women produces some philosophically "insurmountable" problems for Aristotle. The aim of the last section of the paper is to point out how some of these problems could eventually be resolved.*

**Keywords:** Aristotle, women, deliberative faculty, decision-making, authority

### 1. Introduction

Unlike the sophists, Socrates and Plato, Aristotle's views on women could be characterized both as traditional and conservative<sup>1</sup>. What makes them philosophically interesting and challenging is the fact that he did not accept the traditional role of slaves and women for granted, but he provided the explanations for his views. Although it was generally accepted in Greece of Aristotle's time that women should have neither deliberative nor political function in the *polis*, he considered that this thesis ought to be supported by a reasonable explanation. Additionally, women did not play, as

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we all know, any political role in the ancient Greek society. Aristotle did think that this was a valid thesis, giving reasons for such a belief.

The aim of this paper is not to criticize Aristotle's beliefs from the contemporary, feminist perspective,<sup>2</sup> but to reconstruct and critically evaluate his views of the social and political role of women, taking into account the conceptual framework of his philosophy. I will focus on a much-discussed Aristotelian claim on women's deliberative capacity lacking in authority. There are three main interpretations of this thesis, which will be critically discussed. According to the first line of interpretation, Aristotle has in mind that women's inability of advice-giving and decision-making in public affairs is by convention in the political context of his time. Aristotle evidently shared the prevailing opinion of his time about women's inferiority, but I will attempt to prove that the customs of his time were not sufficient validation for his claim that women's deliberative faculty lacks authority. Furthermore, I will put forward the reasons why the more recent interpretation, given by Marguerite Deslauriers, is implausible. According to her, the lack of authority of deliberative faculty in women means nothing else than the tasks over which women have authority are for the purpose of the tasks of men. The prevailing interpretation among scholars is that, in Aristotle's view, women are naturally inferior to men, due to the fact that they are all too frequently overruled by the irrational "forces" of their nature. I will argue that this line of interpretation elucidates what Aristotle presumably has in mind, although it makes his account of women and their rationality, if not inconclusive, then indisputably problematic. I will also attempt to prove that, although the prevailing line of interpretation may be correct, such a view of women produces some almost philosophically "insurmountable" problems to Aristotle. The aim of the last section of the paper is to point out how eventually some of these problems could be solved.

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## **2. The Central Biological Difference between the Male and the Female and its Ethical Implications**

Briefly speaking, in his *Generation of Animals* (GA 765b9–15), Aristotle draws two central differences between the sexes in the generation of offspring. First, the male has full capacity to concoct the semen, due to the amount of its vital heat, and to emit it outside his body, whereas the

2 There are some very insightful papers on Aristotle's philosophy from the feminist perspective. See particularly: Freeland 1998 and Witt 2005.

female's *catamenia*, which can be better or worse concocted, preserves the semen within her body. Second, the male "has the principle of the form" (in his soul) that "determines the shape and the functions of the off-spring" (Deslauriers 2009: 216), while the female contributes only the material to the new offspring, which is "in the substance of *catamenia*" (GA 727b31). The *eidos* of the future offspring is potentially in the soul of the male, and the semen, serving as a kind of instrument, puts "motion in actuality" (GA 765b21), which fundamentally influences both the shape and faculties of the offsprings. The ovum of the female provides merely the material for generation of anew individual. Aristotle's division of the sexual role in generation is not without the evaluation of both sexes. Due to the fact that the female is "incapable of concocting the nutriment in its last stage into semen", "women are", Aristotle concludes, "impotent men (GA 728a 18)". Aristotle seems to surpass the field and the language of science and biology by attributing the female "impotence" to the inability to influence any of the psychic abilities of the child.

There are different opinions among scholars about the relevance of the biological sexual difference (Lange 1983, Deslauriers 2009) for Aristotle's account of the political roles of men and women. Biological differentiation has been considered the foundation for the socio-political, rational and moral differences of the sexes. Lynda Lange (Lange 1983) seems to argue that Aristotle aims to ground the claims on women's political inferiority on the biological differences. On the other hand, Marguerite Deslauriers (Deslauriers 2009) supposes that the reasons why Aristotle's political sexual differences could not be explained in Aristotelian biological, conceptual framework.

In light of *Politics* (1260a7–14), as we will see, one may rightly draw the inference that there is no explicit connection between Aristotle's biological reflections on the female's contribution to the generation of the off-spring and his claims on the political role of women in the society. While arguing on the political role of men and women, he has in mind the psychological make-up, the psychological factors significant for determining the political relations, rather than the biology of both sexes. Nevertheless, Aristotle's vocabulary, used not only to describe, but also to evaluate the female's biological deficiency, points out that his biological claims do not have a neutral meaning, and subsequently do have, albeit indirectly, socio-political implications.

I concur with Marguerite Deslauriers' opinion that Aristotle did not intend to found his political claims on biological differences (Deslauriers



2009: 215), but rather to ground them in the divergent psychological characteristics of men and women. One may, of course, argue that the development of the body during the embryological formation could also affect the psychic abilities and their functioning from perception through imagination to reasoning. For example, some defects of our body can also affect our soul.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, due to Aristotle's thesis of the priority of the soul over the body, one may claim that generally bodily characteristics are not constitutive of psychological characteristics, that is to say, that the body does not determine our soul and its abilities and features. Moreover, the psychic features, particularly of the rational soul, are not reducible to a biological conceptual framework.

Evidently, Aristotle did not program his biology to be the justification for gender differences, neither had he in mind to establish a coherent philosophical account of the female gender founded in his biological writings. Nevertheless, there is a consistency in Aristotle concerning the inferiority of women from the biological through the psychological and to the socio-political level. From these very diverse perspectives, Aristotle evidently held that a woman is a deficient human being, inferior to man in all respects. Therefore, his evaluation of the female's role in the process of natural generation fits in his overall outlook that he has about women. This does not mean, as some scholars did imply (Lange 1983, Okins 1979, etc.), that his "misogynist" reflections have implications for his philosophy in general, and for his metaphysics in particular.<sup>4</sup>

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### 3. The Female's Deliberative Reason without Authority

Aristotle asserts that both men and women do not differ in species, and are therefore humans due to their uniquely human form (*GA* 731b34–732a2, *Met.* 1058a29–b25). Accordingly, they must share the same moral characteristics and intellectual abilities that distinguish humans as rational and political animals. Nevertheless, many times in his *Politics* he states that "according to nature (φύσει)" the male is superior, and the female is inferior, implying, as it might seem, that women, unlike men, are incomplete humans. These evaluative claims on the female's inferiority have social and political consequences. Men should rule and women should be ruled over, i.e., women should be subjected to men in their social and political lives.

3 Regarding the question of the priority in Aristotle's philosophy see Peramatzis 2012.

4 Recently, Charlotte Witt successfully argued that "gender associations with Aristotelian matter and form are extrinsic to these concepts". See Witt 2005: 5.

There is a tendency in the contemporary literature to defend Aristotle from the feminist accusations, by drawing attention to the places where the opposite genders are not accounted for in the terms of men's superiority over women. By suggesting that Aristotle's claims on the gender roles might imply that "the fullest human excellence would combine masculine and feminine inclinations", (Arnhart 1994: 398) overestimates some passages in Aristotle's writings where, indeed, the evaluation of the female and the relationship between genders are more complex and more friendly than it has been usually assumed. The claims for the inferiority of women and their subjection to men's rule are prevailing in Aristotle, whether we concur with them or not, or how we judge them from a contemporary perspective.

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Aristotle, however, does not leave his claims about the men's supremacy over women unexplained. One of the justifications for his beliefs regarding the different political roles of both genders and slaves may found in the following well-known passage:

Almost all things rule (τὰ ἄρχοντα) and are ruled (ἄρχόμενα) according to nature (φύσει). But the free man rules the slave in a different way in which the male rules the female or the man the child; although the parts of the soul (τὰ μέρη τῆς ψυχῆς) are present in all of them, they are present in different ways. For the slave has no deliberative faculty (τὸ βουλευτικόν) at all; the woman has, but it is without authority (ἄκυρον), and the child has, but it is incomplete (ἄτελές). (*Pol.* 1260a7–14)

In my analysis, I will focus on the relationship between the male and the female, skipping the very important question of slavery, for it falls outside the scope of the present discussion. The ruling is strictly predisposed and determined "according to nature", implying that the better should rule over the worse. Analogously, in the human soul the better "part" should rule over the "worse" one, in order for it to accomplish the complete excellence. Aristotle accounts for the political or ruling legitimacy in terms of the ability to deliberate (τὸ βουλευτικόν). It is a disposition to arrive at correct moral and political judgments about what should be done in private and public affairs. This is also a particular kind of means-end reasoning, where the starting point is a good goal and the conclusion is a decision about what should be done here and now, in order to achieve that aim.

Unlike slaves and children, women do possess the capacity to deliberate, which is, however, ἄκυρον. This term can have one of two meanings: it can denote those who has no power or authority; or it can apply to laws or sentences, meaning that they are "no longer in force, cancelled, annulled,

or set aside" (Bradshaw 1991: 564). However, it is very important to understand what Aristotle here meant by the non-authoritative character of deliberative reason in women relative to the authoritative deliberative faculty in men. This issue is crucial for understanding Aristotle's account of both the "nature" of women's reasoning and their exclusion from political life, i.e., public affairs.

There are three lines of interpretation of Aristotle's ambiguous claim that women's practical rationality is "without authority". I will argue that all three of them are problematic. My aim is to prove that the first and the third one seem to lead Aristotle to contradictions, whereas the second one is not supported by the textual evidence in the *Politics*. We cannot be certain as to what Aristotle has in mind, but we can at least attempt a reconstruction of his text.

According to the first line of interpretation, Aristotle reiterates the view, prevailing in Athens of his time, about the women's faculty for deliberation in public affairs. Women might accurately and correctly judge about moral and even political affairs, having at the same time no executive power to implement their judgments. If this is what Aristotle has in mind when he asserts that women do have τὸ βουλευτικόν, but without authority, then he is stating an empirical fact, and it seems that the first line of interpretation is correct. Nevertheless, his claim on the inability of women to rule "without authority" seems to be naturalistic, since it is based on Aristotle's assumptions that women are naturally inferior to men (*Pol.* 1245b12, 1254a14–16, 1259a41). Moreover, Aristotle's first claim in the above-cited passage that "all things rule and are ruled according to nature" presupposes that women rule or are ruled "according to nature". On the other hand, according to the first line of interpretation, women's non-authoritative deliberative faculty seems to be by conventions, i.e., by the opinions and customs of Athenian society of 4th century BC. Subsequently, if we accept this kind of interpretation, it seems that we would have to accept two contradictory claims: that – women's deliberative faculty "without authority" is "according to nature", and that – women's deliberative faculty "without authority" is according to conventions. Or, at least we would weaken Aristotle's argument about women's natural inability to exercise their deliberative faculty, since it lacks authority, by claiming that this is according to the conventions. Aristotle shared the prevailing opinion of his time about women's inferiority, but I do not believe that these opinions and customs were sufficient justification for his claim of women's deliberative faculty lacking authority.

Recently, Marguerite Deslauriers (Deslauriers 2003: 228–229) has suggested an interpretation of the thesis that women's deliberative faculty lacks authority, in terms of the different functions and tasks that men and women exercise (NE 1162b22–3). The functions and tasks of women have authority in different domain. Both genders have some roles and authorities in the household. The duties and tasks of women are restricted to the household, whereas men's duties and tasks “extend beyond the household to the city” (Deslauriers 2003: 228). According to Deslauriers' interpretation of Aristotle, the *polis* has priority over the household, i.e., the household exists and functions for the purpose of the *polis*. Therefore, the ruling of the house hold is for the sake of the ruling of the *polis*, and hence is both better and choice worthy. As Deslauriers rightly claims, the assertion that the woman's faculty of deliberation is “without authority”, means that the deliberations and decisions of women are “subject to the authority of the deliberative faculty in men (Deslauriers 2003: 229)”. In her opinion, the reason for that is that duties and tasks over which women have authority are restricted to the household, and are for the sake of the duties and tasks of men, which are performed in the *polis*. The rule of the household, which is a woman's task, is without authority relative to the rule of the *polis*, which is a man's task. This interpretation appears consistent and conclusive. It also brings out an insight that the deliberative faculty in women is not completely without authority, but is limited to less important and worthwhile jobs.

Yet, this interpretation produces more problems than it solves. First, if Aristotle had had in mind that the authority of women is relative and limited to the household, he would have explicitly said so or at least he would have had indicated it. Second, when claiming that a woman has a deliberative faculty, but without authority, Aristotle does not specify the domains in which this is the case, although the lack of a woman's authority in public affairs is evident. This claim appears more like a general one. Third, in Aristotle's view there is no domain in which only women rule, not even in the household. Apparently women only partake in ruling the household. Aristotle explicitly claims that if women rule in the household, it is not due to their excellence, but because of the wealth and power (NE 1160b38–1161a2), meaning that this kind of ruling is not preferable. Consequently, women should not have exclusive authority in the household, but they share it with their husbands.

The prevailing interpretation among scholars (Fortenbaugh 1977, Modrak 2004, Arnhart 1994) regarding the thesis that the deliberative faculty in

women lacks authority, is based upon certain characteristics of women's nature. According to this interpretation, Aristotle's intention here is to explain why women should not rule, and not simply to state the fact that they cannot rule in the society of his time. In other words, Aristotle makes an effort to justify his previously stated claim that there are natural rulers and natural subjects. This justification is based on the nature of the rulers and their subjects, implying that the nature of the former has to be better and superior than the nature of the latter. It seems that the problem with a woman's nature is that the rational and irrational parts of her soul are not properly balanced, in the sense that irrational "forces" are often not subjected to her deliberative faculty. In other words, the prevailing interpretation takes it that Aristotle's claim that the deliberative faculty of a woman is non-authoritative, is to be understood as follows: a woman's practical reason is all too frequently overcome by the irrational "part" of her soul; that is to say, her deliberative faculty can easily be over-ridden by certain irrational desires or appetites, thus preventing her from making reasonable decisions in public affairs.

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As we can see, according to this line of interpretation Aristotle's controversial and ambiguous claim should be understood in the psychological conceptual framework. It might be claimed that it fits the context, since in *Politics* I.13 Aristotle discusses the relation of the rational and irrational part of the soul. Albeit this discussion does not directly relate to a different deliberative faculty in men and women. A differentiation of the rational and the irrational part of the soul might indicate in what direction the special character of the deliberative faculty in women should be understood.

This line of interpretation in the psychological conceptual framework can be well supported by the passages from the *History of Animals*, in which the male's and female's psychological make-up are distinguished. Aristotle surveys the natural differences between male and female that characterize many animals including human beings, implying that these features cannot be applied only to animals, but also to human beings. Compared with the male, the female is incline to be softer, "more capable of learning (μαθηματικώτερον)"<sup>5</sup> more attentive to nurturing the young, and of "more retentive memory", whereas also being less spirited, less courageous, less savage. Aristotle supplemented his observation by claiming that in comparison to the male the female is "more compassionate, more easily moved to tears", "more jealous, more querulous", "more difficult to rouse to

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5 HA 608a28.

action" (*HA* 608a25–608b19), etc. Aristotle is fully aware that these are general tendencies, and that there are the exceptions, even in one and the same species, but these differences are only in degree (Arnhart 1994: 397).

910 From these comparisons, including other passages in Aristotle (e.g., *PA* 661b33–4), the majority of scholars concluded that Aristotle, when claiming that the women's deliberative capacity lacks authority, meant that women in general are easily and frequently overcome by their irrational forces, which prevents them to exercise their deliberative capacity properly and beneficially both for them and society as such. Presumably, that is what Aristotle has in mind, since it fits the psychological make-up of females, as it is described in the *History of Animals* that they are, in comparison to men, more compassionate, jealous, querulous and easily moved to tears. For being too emotional or not being able to control their emotions, it seems that women in general are naturally incapable of judging properly on public affairs, and accordingly, of making reasonable decisions. Thereby, it is important to stress that their weakness in deliberation is not caused, in Aristotle's view, by their cognitive incapacities. He even stresses that women are "more capable of learning", and that they have "retentive memory". So, he distinguishes here also between the cognitive and deliberative functions of reason.

This interpretation also raises many problems. To say that women cannot rule their emotions is an empirical generalization with lots of exceptions. Fortenbaugh (1977: 138–139) uses an example of Euripides' *Medea* to illustrate this thesis. One may also utilize the counter-example of Homer's Penelope, whose practical reasons was not overruled by emotions. More serious are the problems of philosophical character. If women in general are overcome by appetites, then, as Marguerite Deslauriers rightly objects, it would be difficult for Aristotle to distinguish them from weak willed persons. Furthermore, there are also men overruled by emotions like Homer's Achilles, implying that the subjection to emotions cannot be a *differentia specifica* of women. In addition, Deslauriers objects to this kind of interpretation that if women are unable to control their irrational "forces" by their reason, then they cannot be virtuous.

#### **4. Women, *Phronesis* and Virtues**

I will argue that the above-discussed, prevailing interpretation elucidates what Aristotle presumably has in mind, although it makes his account of women and their rationality if not inconclusive, then indisputably problematic. The additional support for this kind of interpretation will be

provided. I will also attempt to prove that, even if this widespread line of interpretation is correct, it produces intricate problems for Aristotle regarding the question of virtues in women. The aim of the last section of the paper is to point out how eventually some of these problems may be resolved.

Marguerite Deslauriers objects that the last line of interpretation does not have “textual authority” (Deslauriers: 223). The passages from the *History of Animals*, concerning Aristotle’s views of women’s natural tendencies of their psychological make-up, is the textual evidence for those who claim that women are inclined to be overruled by emotions, whereby weakening their deliberative faculty. Moreover, Aristotle’s remarks that women (608a10–19) have the natural inclination not to act, presumably are meant to indicate their frequent indecisiveness in making decisions. This inclination, in Aristotle’s view, makes women incapable to exercise political functions, which require that their participants should be quick, calm and very decisive in action.

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These assumptions are supported by the passage in the *Nicomachean ethics*, where Aristotle discusses the situation, in which a man cannot be overruled by pleasure and pains, claiming that most men can “hold out against, when this is not due to heredity or disease like the softness with the kings of Scythians, or that witch distinguishes the female from the male” (NE 1150b14–16). From this sentence, one might infer the conclusion that, according to Aristotle, a certain moral attitude, for example, the lack of self-control, is under the influence of “a biological, gender-based disposition” (Bradshaw 1991: 568). Referring to the inferior endurance and softness as the innate characteristics, I concur with Bradshaw’s assumption here that, “female sex as a whole suffers from some physiological weakness” (Bradshaw 1991: 568). As, it has been shown, Aristotle utilizes this kind of argumentation, which is of bio-psychological rather than of sociological character, to generalize some of his observations of individual females to the female gender in general. This is, altogether, more than problematic at least due to the reason, with which Aristotle himself might concur, that there are some women, albeit rare and exceptional, who can act reasonably and decisively. It is certain that the prevailing opinions of his time influenced Aristotle’s views, but they are, according to the given textual evidence, grounded in what Aristotle really held about the female nature. This much seems to suggest that these views are for him not pure conventions; they are in fact supported by arguments.

Moreover, it seems that there is a contradiction between the claim about women’s “physiological weakness”, i. e., their inability to control the

irrational “parts” of their soul by reason, and the attribution of virtues to them. It is, indeed, inconsistent to maintain that women cannot subject their irrational appetites and emotions, and to claim that they can be virtuous, which presupposes the acquirement of rational excellence. I will extend the principle of charity to Aristotle, in order to reconcile to some degree his apparently inconsistent views. One may reply to the assumed inconsistency in Aristotle by referring to *Nicomachean Ethics* 1102b28–33, where Aristotle distinguishes reason and the “appetitive and in general the desiring element”, which is irrational, but can also be virtuous by “obeying” reason. Since women have reason and a deliberative faculty, the inference might be drawn that the virtues of the irrational “part” of the soul should be subjected to the virtues of her own reason and deliberative faculty. Taking into account our previous discussion, and Aristotle’s general account of women, one may assert that women do not subject the virtues of the appetitive and desiring part of the soul to their own reason. Yet, due to the fact that women also “share in reason”,<sup>6</sup> they can obey, listen to reason, be cultivated and taught by reason. In order to acquire the virtues of some irrational parts of the soul, it seems obvious that women should teach, educate and guide the irrational desires by reason. On the other hand, women in general have a natural inclination to be subjected to irrational appetites and emotions. This natural inclination, however, can be cultivated and educated, permitting women to develop the virtues. In this context, obeying does not mean pure subjection, but the understanding of the reasons why such subjection is good and beneficial both for our irrational desires and for the functioning of the female’s soul as a whole.

Aristotle’s differentiation between the good understanding and *phronesis*,<sup>7</sup> where the latter presupposes issuing commands, albeit both implying the accurate grasping of the things belonging to the practical realm, is comparable with the relation between the female and the male. Regardless of the advanced faculty of the accurate understanding even of the political matters, the female is deprived of issuing commands. Aristotle might permit that women can command in the domain of the household, but

6 Marguerite Deslauriers states that women and slaves “borrow” the practical rationality from free, rational men, which facilitates their becoming virtuous. Instead of this term, i.e., “borrow”, which might imply that what has been borrowed, has to be returned, I am more inclined to utilize terms such as “share in”, meaning that the irrational “parts” of our soul participate in reason. In this way, reason is present in all other virtues, although it manifests differently in men and women.

7 Bradshaw (1991) discusses in detail the relation between prudence (*pronesis*) and women’s issues.



only under the control of their fathers or husbands, if they believe that her commands are reasonable, and if they allow them to be imposed upon the other members of the household.

When Aristotle discusses the subject-matter of education in the last two books of the *Politics*, he is exclusively concerned with the education of the citizen, and the good citizen is repeatedly identified with the good man. Nevertheless, in their families the women have the opportunity to have access to practical reason in their fathers, and later their husbands. Although women are *dependent* on the others and are not provided the opportunity to acquire a proper education, they are inclined to listen, understand the arguments of others and, consequently, to be taught how to behave rationally in their own right and domain. Therefore, women can be virtuous in so far as they can develop certain kind of virtues suitable to them, by subjecting themselves to teaching and the correct reasoning of free men.

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If the *phronesis*, i.e., the rational, practical excellence, is the only *arete* peculiar to the natural ruler, then there is a problem concerning the attaining of virtues for the subjects, including women, since *phronesis*, according to Aristotle, is the condition for being virtuous. One of the replies to this serious, philosophical problem, concerning the attribution of the *phronesis* to all non-ruling individuals, might be that by partaking in the practical rationality, non-ruling individuals develop the virtues of their own. Despite the fact that women have reason, including a deliberative faculty, according to Aristotle, they are enabled to develop it to its “completeness”, i.e., to its full realization. Women can be moderate, generous, even courageous, but different from men not only in degree, but also in kind. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle gave examples of female character virtues: diligence (φιλεργία, literary “delight in hard work”) and moderation (σωφροσύνη), defined as “the virtue that disposes us to obey νόμος where physical pleasures are concerned” (*Rht.* 1366b14–15).

It seems that the lack of *control* either in the psychic make-up or the political organization prevents women from exercising their deliberative faculty to its full potential, i.e., to its full accomplishment. According to Aristotle, however, women, on one hand, can acquire virtues, but, on the other, in exercising their virtues, they are always do so under someone else’s “command”, either of their fathers or husbands or the prevailing customs of the society they live in. Therefore, according to him, women have virtues, but different in kind to men, which, among other things, means that they participate in reason to some degree. Consequently,

women can develop some virtues, appropriate to them, even to their full “completeness”, as in the case of the definition of feminine *σωφροσύνη* in the *Rhetoric*, but always under the guidance of someone else, i.e., male individuals or certain social and cultural customs.

## 5. Conclusion

Aristotle never disregarded the position of women in a society. Moreover, he criticizes a slavish treatment of women as a matter of brute strength and barbarism. At *Politics* 1259b1, Aristotle even provides a telling analogy of the relation of the male and the female with the rule in the constitutional cities, where citizens are equal. In these cities, one holds an office when it is one's turn. This simile indicated that the male and the female are, in fact, equal like the constitutional rule, although Aristotle never explains why it is never the woman's turn to rule in the household. Nonetheless, we can find in Aristotle places, where he provides a more positive view of the gender relations, although they are not detailed enough, or not systematically connected to overthrow the traditional interpretation of how Aristotle accounted for the female's gender and its social and political role.

If Aristotle, does have in mind that women are seldom capable of ruling, since their deliberative faculty has been overcome by their irrational desires, appetites and emotions, then his thesis has serious social and political consequences. It follows that they should be governed by someone with a fully developed deliberative faculty, i.e., by their fathers or husbands, who possess the authority required for their preferably rational choices both in private and public affairs. Furthermore, it implies that they are fully excluded from public affairs, and they only have authority within the household. Nevertheless, Aristotle asserts that women are even “more capable of teaching”, and have a deliberative faculty, facilitating their correct judgments about practical affairs. If their reason is capable of teaching, listening and understanding reasonable arguments, which can lead women to better and deeper insights, one may rightly raise the question of why they are then incapable of developing the deliberative faculty which could have authority. Such a reply cannot be found in Aristotle.

In the most developed contemporary societies men and women are constitutionally equal. Nonetheless, women's deliberations are all too frequently treated insufficiently recognized, as if they were less sound, reasonable, grounded, even sometimes as having no authority at all. The laws, which guarantee the equality of all citizens, are obligatory not

only for the equality of both genders, but also for the punishment of those who are breaking these laws. The lesson we can learn from Aristotle, concerning the issue of authority, is that all individuals, including women in our contemporary societies, should primarily perform and develop both their intellectual and character excellences to their complete accomplishment, if they want their deliberations to be accepted “with authority”. It is, indeed, not the only, but the best way to “fight” against traditionally grounded constraints and prejudices of all kinds.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> I wish to express my gratitude to Christos Panayides for his insightful reading of my manuscript and his useful comments.

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Irina Deretić

Zašto ženska sposobnost rasuđivanja nema autoritet?

Aristotel o političkoj ulozi žena

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Rezime

U ovom radu raspravljaću o Aristotelovim kontroverznim pogledima o ženama. Kritički ću preispitati tri glavne interpretacije njegove tvrdnje da žene imaju sposobnost rasuđivanja, ali „bez autoriteta“. Interpretatori, koji spadaju u prvu grupu tumača ove tvrdnje, smatraju da je Aristotel pod time podrazumevao da je ženska nesposobnost da daje ispravne savete i donosi pravilne odluke prouzrokovana konvencijama i običajima vremena u kojem je živio. Nastojacu da ukažem na loše strane ovog tipa tumačenja. Nadalje, izneću razloge zašto nije uverljiva jedna od novijih interpretacija koju iznosi Margaret Delorje. Prema njenom čitanju, nedostatak autoriteta u ženskoj sposobnosti rasuđivanja ne znači ništa drugo do to da zadacima, nad kojima žene imaju autoritet sprovode se zarad zadataka nad kojima muškarci imaju autoriteta. Prema preovlađujućem tumačenju, među znalcima antičke baštine, Aristotel je smatrao da su žene inferiorne u odnosu na muškarce, zato što isuviše često bivaju nadvladane iracionalnim „silama“ svoje prirode. Argumentovaću u prilog toga da upravo ova preovlađujuća interpretacija razjašnjava ono što je Aristotel najverovatnije imao u vidu, premda to čini njegovo shvatanje žena i njihove racionalnosti ako ne inkonzistentnim, onda neosporno problematičnim. Drugim rečima, nastojacu na pokažem da ukoliko je preovlađujući tip interpretacije ispravan, takvo shvatanje žena za Aristotela proizvodi neke filozofski „nepremostive“ probleme. Cilj poslednjeg dela ovog rada jeste da se ukaže kako bi se neki od tih problema mogli rešiti.

**Ključne reči:** Aristotel, žene, sposobnost rasuđivanja, donošenje odluka, autoritet

Rastko Jovanov

## Mimesis, Gesetz, Kampf. Ein Beitrag zur Sozialontologie

**Zusammenfassung** In dieser Arbeit werde ich mich auf und gegen der Theorie von Edith Stein über die kollektiven Identität anknüpfen, mit dem Versuch eine neue sozialontologische Theorie von der verschiedenen Gestalten des Gruppenidentität anzubieten. Ich unterscheide drei grundlegende Gestalten des Zusammenlebens: Masse, Vereinigungen und Gemeinschaften. Jede von dieser drei Formen wird durch verschiedene Eigenschaften charakterisiert. Zugleich werde ich mit der Hilfe von der Hegelschen Lehre über dem objektiven Geiste diese drei Gestalten der kollektiven Identitäten differenzieren und auslegen.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Solidarität, kollektive Identität, mimesis, das gesetzte Gesetz, Kampf, Masse, Vereinigung, Gemeinschaft, Edith Stein, Hegel

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Diese Arbeit versucht,<sup>1</sup> einen Beitrag für die Forschung der Solidarität zu leisten, wobei diese als der grundlegende Faktor verstanden wird, durch den sich die Mitglieder einer Gruppe mit ihr identifizieren und gemeinsam ein überpersönliches Subjekt errichten, welches wiederum die Handlung der Mitglieder normativ reguliert.<sup>2</sup> Zuerst werde ich die grundlegenden Ansätze Edith Steins über elementare soziale Gruppen präsentieren, die sie in ihrem Werk *Eine Untersuchung über den Staat* und in zweiter Abhandlung ("Individuum und Gemeinschaft") der *Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften* vorgelegt hat. Beide Bücher wurden in Husserls *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* veröffentlicht (in den Bänden V und VII).<sup>3</sup> Meines Erachtens kann Steins Theorie der Gruppenidentität eine ergiebige Grundlage für die Untersuchung der kollektiven Identität anbieten und doch wurde ihr sozialontologisches Potential in der gegenwärtigen Sozialontologie unverständlicherweise bisher kaum wahrgenommen und verwendet. Ihre Klassifikation der Grundformen

1 Dieser Aufsatz wurde im Rahmen des Projekts "Die Politiken des gesellschaftlichen Gedächtnisses und der nationalen Identität: Regionaler und europäischer Kontext" (179049) geschrieben (finanziert durch das Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und technologische Entwicklung der Republik Serbien).

2 Für die aktuelle sozialontologische Untersuchung der Gruppensolidarität, vgl. Tuomela 2013 und Laitinen & Pessi 2014.

3 *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*. Zusammen mit Oskar Becker (Freiburg), Moritz Geiger (München), Martin Heidegger (Freiburg), Alexander Pfänder (München), Adolf Reinach (Göttingen), Max Scheler (Berlin), herausgegeben von E. Husserl. Halle a. S.: Max Niemeyer Verlag. Band V stammt aus 1922 und Band VII aus 1925.

des Zusammenlebens in Masse, Gesellschaft und Gemeinschaft betrachte ich als grundsätzlich richtig und folglich werde ich an sie meine Typologie der elementaren sozialen Gruppen anknüpfen. Dabei gehe ich davon aus, dass jede Gruppe neben dem zugehörigen eigenen Gemeinschaftserlebnis und der gemeinsamen Intentionalität auch durch eine eigene exklusive Solidaritätsform charakterisiert wird. Hier werden zwei Hauptthesen aufgestellt und untersucht: (1) die Gruppensolidarität beinhaltet verschiedene Formen und nimmt verschiedene Gestalten an; (2) eine Gesellschaft läßt sich auf Dauer nicht durch Solidarität stabilisieren. Und abschließend möchte ich noch einige Konsequenzen der sozialontologischen Untersuchung der Solidarität herausstellen, die einige Auswirkungen auf die politische Ontologie des Staates als eine Form der kollektiven Identität haben könnten.

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Stein unterscheidet drei Grundtypen des intersubjektiven Lebens – Masse, Gesellschaft und Gemeinschaft – aufgrund des Begriffs des Gemeinschaftserlebnisses und als Analogie zur einzelnen menschlichen Person. Die persönliche Identität begründet sie auf der psychologischen Verwandtschaft zwischen intentionalen Abschnitten oder Erlebnisströmen. Eine Person ist dann die Assoziation oder Ansammlung von Intentionen, Glauben, Wünschen zu verschiedenen Zeitpunkten. Stein zufolge ist es „höchst wunderbar, wie dieses Ich [...] eingehen kann in eine Lebensgemeinschaft mit anderen Subjekten, wie das individuelle Subjekt Glied wird eines überindividuellen Subjekts und wie im aktuellen Leben einer solchen Subjektgemeinschaft oder eines Gemeinschaftssubjekts sich auch ein überindividueller Erlebnisstrom konstituiert.“ (Stein 1922: 119). Die Gemeinschaftserlebnisse sind für jede soziale Gruppe konstitutiv, die Einheit des Gemeinschaftserlebnisses wird durch eine durchgehende Intention auf das überindividuelle Objekt begründet. Sodann erweisen die auf ein überindividuelles Objekt gerichteten Erlebnisse neben der gegenständlichen Intentionen auch eine für die Entstehung einer Gruppe wesentlichen Intention auf das Gemeinschaftserlebnis.

Jedoch, was macht den Unterschied zwischen einem individuellen und einem Erlebnis, das ich als Mitglied einer Gruppe mit allen anderen Mitgliedern derselben Gruppe teile, aus? Stein gibt dazu das Beispiel des Verlusts eines Truppenleiters. Gewiss ist das individuelle Ich von Trauer erfüllt, aber das Erlebnis ist wesentlich dadurch strukturiert, „daß andere daran teilhaben, oder vielmehr, daß ich nur als Glied einer Gemeinschaft daran teilhabe“ (Stein 1922: 120). Dieses durch Verlust betroffene *Wir*

umfasst alle Gruppenmitglieder, auch diejenige, die z. B. Sich des Verlustes nicht bewusst waren. Das *Wir* ist eigentlich das *Subjekt* des Gemeinschaftserlebnisses und ohne es existiert das *Wir* einer Gruppe nicht. „Ich traure als Glied der Truppe, und die Truppe trauert in mir.“ (Stein 1922: 120)

Als am niedrigsten und losesten strukturierte soziale Gruppe betrachtet Stein die *Masse*. Sie ist ein „Zusammen sich gleichförmig verhaltender Individuen“ (Stein 1922: 218). Hier gibt es keine innere Einheit, aus der heraus die Gruppe leben könnte. Die Einheit der Gruppe stellt in dem Fall nur die Folge des reinen Beisammenseins dar. Das Gemeinschaftserlebnis eines Mitgliedes der Masse hat die gleiche Form wie die Erlebnisse der anderen Mitglieder der Masse, die mit ihm zu einer Einheit verbunden ist. Da eine Masse eines Führers bedarf, der ihr leitende Ziele vorgibt, lässt sie sich in einer Außenperspektive schwer von einer Gemeinschaft unterscheiden. Mit dem Verlust der führenden Persönlichkeit bedeutet in den meisten Fällen auch der Untergang der Masse selbst, weil mit diesem Verlust auch der Anschein verschwindet, dass eine Masse eine strenge und dauernde Gruppe darstellt. Das gleiche gilt auch für die Situation wenn die Masse ihr erzieltes Objekt erreicht: zugleich verschwindet auch sie und hört auf, als eine Gruppe weiter zu existieren. Es ist aber klar, dass die Masse manchmal einen weitaus höheren Grad innerer Solidarität vorweisen kann, was sich etwa bei öffentlichen Protesten beobachten lässt. Darum ist es schwer zu begreifen, was Stein eigentlich unter Massen versteht. An einer Stelle erwähnt sie, dass Massen Volksschichten sind, an einer anderen sind sie das Proletariat. Auf jeden Fall handelt es sich hier um strukturschwache Bewegungen von verschiedenen unbefriedigten Einzelnen - es geht um ideologische Bewegungen, für die es sich schwer sagen lässt, dass sie jemals eine typische Form des Zusammenlebens bzw. eine soziale Gruppe dargestellt haben.

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Die zweite Kategorie der sozialen Kollektivität, die *Gesellschaft* lässt sich Stein zufolge am Zutreffendsten als eine Art von Gemeinschaft ansehen. Wie jede Gemeinschaft stellt eine Gesellschaft eine Gruppe von Individuen mit kommunalen Erfahrungen dar. Die Mitglieder der Gesellschaft beziehen sich aber überwiegend als Objekte aufeinander. Hier kann man also nicht so etwas wie gegenseitige Anerkennung antreffen. Den Anderen als Werkzeug zur Erreichung eigener Zwecke zu betrachten, stimmt mit der rein rationalen Art der Entstehung der Gesellschaft überein. Diese wird durch „Willkürakte einzelner Personen“ (Stein 1922: 230) gestiftet und durch Beschlüsse gefestigt. Das beste Beispiel hierzu stellt wohl die Gründung eines Vereins dar, worin die Realisierung des Vereinsprogramms bzw. die Erreichung eines Zweckes überhaupt als Grund für die

Entstehung jeder Gesellschaft oder - wie Stein sie nennt - des Zweckverbandes dient. Deswegen spricht Stein vom „Leben“ als der „auf das zu erreichende Ziel gerichtete Tätigkeit“, und „Entwicklung“, als der „Annäherung an das Ziel“ - der Gesellschaft (Stein 1922: 230). Für die Gesellschaft ist charakteristisch, „exklusiv“ zu sein; ihr inneres Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl charakterisiert, den Anderen auszuschließen und eine andere Gruppe zu bekämpfen. Demzufolge kann Gesellschaft als eine Art Kampfgesellschaft betrachtet werden. Das Auftreten einer inneren Gruppensolidarität ist in diesem Zusammenhang das Entscheidende.

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Als wichtigsten Punkt hier sehe ich Steins Betrachtung der Gesellschaft als eine Art zeitlichen Gegenstand (Stein 1922: 234), die auf der A. Reinachs Theorie von apriorischen Grundlagen des bürgerlichen Rechts (vgl. Reinach 1913) beruht: „Wie ein Anspruch durch einen Akt des Versprechens entsteht und durch einen Verzicht wieder aus der Welt geschafft wird, so wird die Gesellschaft durch spontane Akte des Stiftens und Auflösens geschaffen und vernichtet.“ (Stein 1922: 234) Gerade als zielstrebende Gruppe sind Gesellschaften wesentlich zeitlich bestimmt. Außer der festen Struktur gibt Stein jedoch kein anderes Kriterium, das die Gesellschaft von der Masse trennen würde, und zugleich versäumt sie, die Bindung jeder Gesellschaft an die bestehenden rechtlichen Normen zu betonen. Eine objektorientierte Handlungsweise und die Auffassung anderer Mitglieder als rein auf die Zielerreichung reduziertes Mittel, sorgen für die Klarstellung des Solidaritätsbegriffs innerhalb der Gesellschaft als einen durch den Zweckverband begrenzten und bestimmten.

Stein zufolge existiert in der Gesellschaft keine kollektive Solidarität, weil innerhalb der Gesellschaft die intersubjektive Solidarität als „planmäßig“ (Stein 1922: 117) bestimmt ist. Wahre Solidarität entsteht nur in der Gemeinschaft, worin die Intersubjektivität auf gegenseitiger Anerkennung und überindividueller Erlebniseinheit gegründet ist.

Nur die *Gemeinschaft* stellt, so Stein, ein Lebewesen dar, das nicht gegründet und aufgelöst wird, sondern erwächst und stirbt. Wie bei einem Organismus sind die Mitglieder der Gemeinschaft nur Organe für die Entfaltung ihrer ursprünglichen Anlage. Denn „eine Einigung ist nur auf der Grundlage einer ursprünglichen inneren Gemeinsamkeit möglich“ (Stein 1922: 236). Die *Gemeinsamkeit des Lebens* und nicht nur bloßes Beisammensein, die für jede Gemeinschaft charakteristisch ist, setzt voraus, dass „ein Individuum dem anderen nicht als Subjekt dem Objekt gegenübersteht, sondern mit ihm lebt, von seinen Motiven getrieben wird usw.“ (Stein 1922: 238). Die Gemeinsamkeit ist demnach eine intersubjektive



Anerkennungsrelation. Das Wesen des Gemeinschaftslebens liegt aber darin, dass „die Subjekte nicht aufeinander gerichtet, sondern gemeinsam einem Gegenständlichen zugewendet sind“ (Stein 1922: 244). Insoweit die Gemeinsamkeit des Lebens erreicht ist, ist dann das Subjekt der Handlung nicht mehr der Einzelne, sondern die Gemeinschaft *in* ihm und *durch* ihn.

Deswegen schreibt Stein nur der Gemeinschaft eine erlebte Solidarität zu, die für jene aufgrund der Einheit des Erlebniszusammenhangs bestimmend ist. Eine solche Solidarität ist „gemeinschaftsbildend“ (Stein 1922: 192), sodass es keine Gemeinschaft ohne Solidarität geben kann. Der „Erlebnisstrom“ eines jeden Individuums kann nur ausgehend von einer ursprünglichen gemeinsamen Basis entwickelt werden. Die Handlung anderer Mitglieder motiviert meine Handlung, insofern von einer grundlegenden Zustimmung gemeinsam ausgegangen wird. Die Solidarität zwischen den Mitgliedern gründet gerade auf diesem ursprünglichen gemeinsamen Boden.

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## II

Im Unterschied zu Stein werde ich versuchen zu zeigen, dass der Identität einer sozialen Gruppe, neben dem Gemeinschaftserlebnis und der gemeinsamen Intentionalität, auch das auf dem Gemeinschaftserlebnis aufgebaute Solidaritätsgefühl notwendig zukommt. Mit der Erfahrung des Gemeinschaftserlebnisses bildet sich zugleich auch die Solidarität heraus. Das ist aber auch der Grund dafür, warum größere Gemeinschaften, wie etwa Staaten, nur in bestimmten einzelnen Notfällen als „kollektive Identität“ bezeichnet werden können.<sup>4</sup>

In meiner Typologie der sozialen Gruppen, denen die verschiedenen Arten der kollektiven Identität zugeschrieben werden können, schlage ich folgende Differenzierung vor:

- (1) *Masse* mit *mimetischen* Intentionen;
- (2) *Vereinigung* mit *reflexiven*, *zweckmäßigen* und durch das *gesetzte Gesetz* begründeten Intentionen;  
und
- (3) *Gemeinschaft* mit von Außen vermittelten *kollektiven* Intentionen.

<sup>4</sup> Die Solidarität entsteht keineswegs nur aus der existentiellen Bedrohung, wie etwa bei den größeren Gemeinschaften, sondern es gibt auch so etwas wie eine „emphatische“ Solidarität, z. B. innerhalb der Familie. Der Terminus „emphatische Solidarität“ nehme ich von Baumgartner & Korff 1990.

Dabei werde ich zu zeigen versuchen, dass jede Gruppengestalt ihre Identität auf gemeinsamen Intentionen im Gemeinschaftserlebnis gründet. Sofern einige Gemeinschaftserlebnisse in einer Gruppe vorhanden sind, kann diese Gruppe ungeachtet der Wandlungen die sie durchmacht fortbestehen. Wir reden z.B. von der serbischen Verfassung und glauben, dass es so etwas wie die serbische Verfassung in der Tat auch gibt trotz ihrer geschichtlichen Wandlungen.

## II. 1

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Wenn ich über Masse spreche, dann denke ich vor allem an räumlich und zeitlich begrenzte Massen, wie zum Beispiel bestimmte Klassenschichten mit von ihnen geäußerten Forderungen, verschiedene öffentliche Proteste oder Fußballfan-Gruppen. Wie jede soziale Gruppe basiert die Masse auf gemeinsamer Intentionalität. In diesem Fall übernehmen die Mitglieder voneinander diese Intentionalität *mimetisch*. Ein Mitglied der Masse ist durch andere Mitglieder dazu *veranlasst*, dieselbe Intention für seine Handlung vorauszusetzen. Deswegen beruht die Gruppenintentionalität der Masse weder auf gemeinsamen intentionalen Zwecken und noch auf dem gemeinsamen Gemeinschaftserlebnis, sondern sie findet ihre Identität als bereits *vorhandene* vor.

Da Solidarität in der Masse aus *mimesis* entsteht, beinhaltet sie oft eine Gestalt der extremen Gewalt. Denn *mimesis* wird durch einen feinen Zwangsakt charakterisiert. Das Verbot der mimetischen Verdoppelung von Individuen aus einer und derselben Gruppe verhindert die Gewalt. Die Handlungen der Einzelnen innerhalb der Masse sind einer mimetischen Verzauberung ausgesetzt, in der sie verhaftet und dem anonymen Anderen unterworfen sind. Darum nenne ich die Solidarität, die man in der Masse vorfindet, die *pseudo-sittliche Solidarität*.<sup>5</sup> Es handelt sich dabei also um keine *reflexive* durch das Gemeinschaftserlebnis vermittelte Solidarität zwischen den Mitgliedern. Obwohl es auf den ersten Blick erstaunen mag, basiert die Solidarität innerhalb der Masse auf der ursprünglichen Annahme der sittlichen Regeln der Gruppe, so dass man hier von einem sittlichen Zwang reden kann. Auf diese Weise trägt die Masse in ihrer Struktur die Färbung der vorstaatlichen Gestaltungen archaischer Gruppen. Autorität und Führerschaft, die durch die Möglichkeit, Entscheidungen zu fällen, für jede soziale Gruppe konstitutiv sind, gehen nicht von der Gewalt als Manifestation der Macht zum Zweck

5 Dieser Bestimmung sollte man nicht mit der Hegelschen Auffassung des Sittlichen und der Sittlichkeit verwechseln.

der Organisation der Handlungsorientierung der Mitglieder aus (was jedoch bei entwickelten Gemeinschaften der Fall ist), sondern hier geht es um die feinen Akte des psychologischen und sittlichen Zwangs.

Falls wir die politische Ontologie mit der sozialen Ontologie verbinden möchten – und ich bin der Meinung, dass dies nicht nur wünschenswert, sondern auch notwendig ist –, dann könnte man die Masse politisch als Konservatismus bestimmen. Sie schließt sich nämlich streng gegen die anderen Teile derselben Gesellschaft ab und erlaubt keine Änderung an ihrer Struktur. Denn durch die Änderung der Gruppenstruktur würde sich auch die Gruppe selbst ändern. Das heißt, dass es nicht mehr die gleiche Fußballfan-Gruppe, nicht mehr die gleiche Protestgruppe usw. wäre.

## II. 2

Die zweite Gruppe stellen verschiedene Formen von Vereinigungen dar. Dabei denke ich vor allem an politische Parteien, Korporationen, Vereine, Ausschüsse etc., die Gruppen also, deren Identität innerhalb einer größeren Gesellschaft und wesentlich in Bezug auf positive Normen des Rechtssystems fundiert ist. Die Gesamtheit dieser Gruppen bildet eine Gesellschaft im weiteren Sinne. Für das menschliche Leben sind diese Formen des Zusammenlebens und Miteinanderseins von entscheidender Bedeutung. Normativ und nicht geschichtlich-deskriptiv betrachtet gibt es weder eine größere Gemeinschaft – wie etwa Volk oder Staat – noch eine kleinere Gemeinschaft – wie etwa Familie – ohne die Möglichkeit, innerhalb einer bestimmten Gruppe als Individuum seine eigenen Zwecke verfolgen zu können. Mit anderen Worten: um sich mit sich selbst vereinigen zu können, muss dies vorerst mit anderen machbar sein. Denn die Strukturen des Selbst sind von relationaler Natur. Die Identität des Einzelnen lässt sich nicht ohne sein Partizipieren an einem größeren sozialen Körper denken. Sie ist immer eine sozial-lebensweltlich kontextualisierte Figur. Deswegen hat auch Hegel argumentiert, dass „... das Konkretum der *Vorstellung*, das man *Mensch* nennt“ (PhR §190 A)<sup>6</sup> erst und eigentlich nur in den Vereinigungen, in der Gesellschaft gefunden werden kann.

Die Intentionalität, worauf die Identität der Vereinigungen basiert, ist eine gemeinsame, reflexive und instrumentelle Intentionalität. Vereinigungen sind dadurch charakterisiert, dass sie einem gemeinsam intendierten Zweck folgen. Ein als zu realisierendes, gesetztes Ziel macht wesentlich

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<sup>6</sup> Die Abkürzung „PhR“ steht für: G.W.F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (1821). Wobei „A“ steht für Hegels Anmerkungen zur Paragraphen und „Z“ für die Zusätze, welche Eduard Gans in zweiter Ausgabe der *Grundlinien* zugeführt hat.

die Intentionalität von Handlungen aus. Das bedeutet, dass es sich hier um eine reflexive Intentionalität handelt, die auf die intentionale Bezugnahme selbst orientiert ist, gerade im Unterschied zur ersten Gruppe, für die eine vorreflexive, mimetische Intentionalität charakteristisch und die den intentionalen Dingen zugewendet ist. Die Intention der Vereinigungen verschwindet nicht wie bei der Masse im Zuge ihrer Objektivierung, sondern sie verändert dabei ihr Objekt, während die Form der Intention weiterhin die gleiche bleibt und sich notwendigerweise auf alle Gruppenmitglieder erstreckt.

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Ein weiteres Merkmal solcher Vereinigungen ist die hierarchische Ordnung, in welcher sich die gegenseitige Anerkennung der Mitglieder horizontal und vertikal verbreitet. Horizontal gesehen befinden sich die Mitglieder nicht nur als quasi rechtliche Partner, sondern auch als moralische Mitglieder eines höherstufig gerechtfertigten Körpers in einem Verhältnis der gegenseitigen Anerkennung (vgl. Honneth 2011: 329). Vertikal gesehen steht wie bei jedem anderen Gruppentypus an der Spitze einer solchen Vereinigung eine klar erkennbare autoritative Behörde. Diese ist nötig, weil erst durch sie eine Gruppe die Möglichkeit für eine kollektive Handlung (joint actions) erhält. Die Mitglieder entscheiden zusammen über ihre Repräsentanten, die für sie qua Gruppe handeln werden. Ohne die Existenz eines handlungsfähigen Organs wird die Vereinigung lediglich aufgrund eines bloßen, die Freiheitsanforderung nicht erfüllenden Naturprinzips handeln. Das Gemeinschaftserlebnis eines solchen die Gruppe konstituierenden Handlungsorgans ist auch konstitutiv dafür, welche Handlungen in welchen Kontexten als Gruppenhandlungen gelten dürfen. Wenn z.B. ich als Mitglied des leitenden Ausschusses meines Instituts für Philosophie ein Buch aus der Institutsbibliothek ausleihe, gilt das nicht automatisch auch für den genannten Ausschuss. Diesbezüglich kann man von einer Durkheimischen "Arbeitsteilung" innerhalb der Gruppe reden: einige Mitglieder sind berechtigt, im Auftrag der Gruppe zu handeln, aber nur in einem durch die von der Gruppe anerkannten, Normen geprägten Kontext (Ähnliches behauptet auch Tuomela in: Tuomela 1995).

Um zu sehen, worin die sozialontologische Besonderheit der Vereinigungen besteht, muss man zuerst bemerken, dass ihre wichtigste Bestimmung darin besteht, dass sie durch die *gesetzten Gesetze*, das positive Rechtssystem also institutionsbedingt ist. Ihre Intentionalität ist nicht nur gemäß den positiven Gesetzen, sondern in großem Maße auch auf der Form des Gesetzes selbst, bzw. auf ihrer Veränderung eingerichtet.

Meines Erachtens ist es sinnvoll, die Sozialontologie des Gesetzes in Verbindung mit der ontologischen Konstitution der Vereinigungen auszuliegen. Für eine solche Untersuchung kann uns die Argumentation Hegels zur Ontologie des Gesetzes hilfreich sei.

Hegel geht vom „Recht des Eigentums“ als der universellen Bestimmung der Gesellschaft in ihrer „geltenden Wirklichkeit“ (PhR §208) aus, um die Natur des Gesetzes zu untersuchen. Ihm zufolge werden die Gesetze dann und nur dann ausgebildet, wenn eine soziale Gruppe ihre Intentionalität auf etwas Allgemeines richtet (§209 Z). Die objektive Wirklichkeit des Rechts besteht dann aus zwei Teilen: (1) „für das Bewußtsein zu sein, überhaupt gewußt zu werden“; und (2) „die Macht der Wirklichkeit zu haben und zu gelten und damit auch als allgemein Gültiges gewußt zu werden“ (§210). Sozialontologisch gelesen heißt das: das Gesetz als das institutionelle Fakt entsteht in seiner allgemeinen Geltung durch den sozial-konstitutiven Akt der Intentionalität. In anderen Worten: die Gesetze sind die institutionellen Fakten, die entweder für die Gesellschaft im weiten Sinne (als Gesamtheit der Vereinigungen) oder innerhalb einer Vereinigung gelten, welche im Besitz der legitimen Macht ist, um im Rahmen ihrer besonderen Gruppe die eigenen intentionalen als allgemein-gültigen Werte zu setzten. Die Gesetze als „objektive Wirklichkeit des Rechts“ (§210) sind notwendig mit der individuellen Intentionalität verbunden bzw. sind da, um „für das Bewußtsein zu sein“ (§210). Das Gesetz ist das Bekannte (§211), d. h. vor seiner Konstituierung gilt das Gesetz als vorreflexive Sittlichkeit, es beinhaltet jedoch nicht die Form der Allgemeinheit, die es erst durch das Verhältnis des Bewusstseins der Individuen zu ihm erhält (§211). Denn sittliche Gesetze sind Hegel zufolge auch wesentlich die Gedanken (§211 A). An dieser Stelle macht Hegel eine Unterscheidung, welche an John Searls Differenzierung zwischen „brute“ und „institutional facts“ erinnert. Ich zitiere: „Die Sonne wie die Planeten haben auch ihre Gesetze, aber sie wissen sie nicht...“ (§211 Z). Das Gesetz ist nämlich die Identität von Ansichsein und Gesetzsein und die ihr zugehörige Intentionalität ist nicht anderes als das Zur-Geltung-bringen von etwas, was im Bewusstsein als an-sich anwesend ist. Aber erst innerhalb einer bestimmten Gruppe, d. i. in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft wird Recht an-sich bzw. Hegel zufolge das Gesetz. Weil einmal erstellt, bestehen geistige Artefakte als materielle, von uns unabhängige Objekte fort. Denn ohne Menschen besteht die Banknote als ein materielles Objekt fort, aber es ist sinnlos zu sagen, dass sie als Banknote fortbesteht, sondern nur als ein schlichter Papierbogen. Das gleiche gilt für das Gesetz: man kann das Gesetz nicht vorfinden, nicht zwischen

anderen Gegenständen in der Außenwelt beobachten. Das Gesetz ist nur auf einen Ort beschränkt – auf den Geist des Menschen und auf seine Intentionalität. Das Gesetz ist eine intentionale Idee, wie das Proletariat oder die Welt selbst.

Kurzum: Gesetze sind institutionelle Fakten, die mittels ihrer Formen das Zusammenleben der Individuen ermöglichen. Das, was wir heute als institutionelle Fakten untersuchen, hat Hegel selbst als "Förmlichkeiten" beschrieben: „In der Gesellschaft kommen deswegen in Beziehung auf das Eigentum Förmlichkeiten vor: man setzt Grenzsteine zum Zeichen für das Anerkenntnis anderer, man legt Hypothekenbücher, Verzeichnisse des Eigentums an. Das meiste Eigentum in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft beruht auf Vertrag, dessen Förmlichkeiten fest und bestimmt sind.“ (§217 Z) Das Gesetz als Förmlichkeit verleiht also nur die Form zu dem, worüber die Menschen zuvor ein Einverständnis erzielt haben. Denn damit das Gesetz „rechtsmächtig“ (§217) wird, bedarf es einer vorausgehenden Einverständnis der Mitglieder einer Gesellschaft über ihm als dem institutionellen Akt.

Ein weiteres Merkmal der Vereinigungen liegt darin, dass sie durch das Vermögen, bzw. Unvermögen der Macht bestimmt sind. Wenn die Masse durch die *Instrumentalität* der Gewalt bestimmt ist – und hier beziehe ich mich auf Hannah Arendts Differenzierung zwischen Macht und Gewalt –, dann geht es bei den Vereinigungen um die *Legitimität* der Macht. Das heißt, wenn die gemeinsame Intentionalität von Handlungen Vereinigungen charakterisiert, dann entspricht die Macht „der menschlichen Fähigkeit, nicht nur zu handeln oder etwas zu tun, sondern sich mit anderen zusammenzuschließen und im Einvernehmen mit ihnen zu handeln“ (Arendt 1993: 45). Diese Macht „ist im Besitz einer Gruppe und bleibt nur solange existent, als die Gruppe zusammenhält. Wenn wir von jemand sagen, er >>habe die Macht<<, heißt das in Wirklichkeit, daß er von einer bestimmten Anzahl von Menschen ermächtigt ist, in ihrem Namen zu handeln.“ (ibid.) Vereinigungen lassen sich wesentlich dadurch bestimmen, dass sie die Existenz einer autoritären, die Macht der Gruppe leitenden Behörde beinhalten. Daher kann man das politische Bestimmungswort von Vereinigungen als *agon* oder *Kampfgesellschaft* kennzeichnen und zwar im Sinne, dass das, was die Gesellschaft zusammenhält, gerade dieser grundlegende, durchgreifende Antagonismus ist. Im Rahmen eines solchen Antagonismus ist eine neutrale Position nicht möglich, denn jeder ist Mitglied einer Vereinigung. (Ich bin Rastko Jovanov. Unter meinem Nachnamen stehen zugleich die sozialen Fakten,

die mich wesentlich bestimmen: ich bin Mitarbeiter an der Universität, Mitglied des leitenden Ausschusses des Instituts usw. Ich kann mich also ohne die institutionellen Fakten wie „Professor“ und „Universität“ nicht beschreiben.)

Die Solidarität, die man in verschiedenen Gestalten der Vereinigungen antrifft, ist eigentlich die einzige völlig gesellschaftliche Form der Solidarität. Eine solche Solidarität hat ihre Besonderheit darin, dass sie immer auch eine Solidarität *gegen* andere Gruppen ist. An einer solchen Solidarität ist ihre innere Erscheinung ebenso wichtig wie ihre äußere (vgl. Tuomela 2013: 246). Ferner werden die Solidaritätsformen und -ziele bewusst ausgewählt - sie sind an Freiwilligkeit und Verträge verbunden. Der Zugang zur Solidarität geschieht nicht über den Einzelnen und seine Bedürfnisse, sondern über Gruppen, mit denen man sich solidarisiert.

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## II. 3

Die dritte Gruppenart mit einer eigenen kollektiven Identität sind Gemeinschaften, die Pflicht zur Begründung der Solidarität wächst. Hier muss man eine grundlegende Differenzierung zwischen zwei Hauptformen von Gemeinschaften machen. Nämlich, zwischen den kleinen Gemeinschaften, wie etwa der Familie, die in die vorgegebene Sittlichkeit versunken sind und mit der Masse eine mimetische Solidarität teilen. Eine solche Gemeinschaft erwächst sich aus dem Liebesgefühl und die Solidarität, die zwischen den Mitgliedern der Familie herrscht, ist eine emphatische. Und zwischen den größeren Gemeinschaften, wie das Volk oder der Staat sind. Nur diese zweite Form der Gemeinschaft untersuche ich in dieser Arbeit.

Meines Erachtens haben Gemeinschaften einen wesentlichen Bezug zu politischer Ontologie. Hier geht es um die soziale Gruppe (das Volk), die zu einem Staat geworden ist. Wir können auch über die Gemeinschaft ohne Staat sprechen, ich untersuche aber nur solche Gemeinschaften, die sich zur modernen Staatlichkeit erhoben haben. Ein weiteres Kennzeichen, welches differenziert diese von den beiden vorherigen Gruppenarten unterscheidet, besteht darin, dass es bei solchen Gruppen um geistige Einheit geht, die aus der politischen, überpersönlichen Solidarität entsteht. Diese Solidarität basiert auf der Identität des Rechts und der moralischen Pflicht. Sie werden durch *joint commitments* gestiftet, d. h. gemeinsame Verpflichtungen, die nur im Notstand (und in den an ihn gebundenen gemeinsamen Erlebnissen) entstehen (Naturkatastrophen, Kriege...). Nur die in Gefahr geratene Selbsterhaltung der Gemeinschaft

führt zur Erscheinung der geistigen Einheit, deren Phänomene *joint commitments* sind.<sup>7</sup> In allen anderen Fällen herrschen in solchen Gemeinschaften die agonistische Politik und kämpfend ausgetragene Konkurrenz zwischen einzelnen Vereinigungen. Die Identität der Gemeinschaft wird jedoch durch Erinnerungen bewahrt. Denn wenn die Identität fixiert, ganz fest und unveränderlich wird, wird sie im Gegenteil im Sinne bloßer Übereinstimmung mit dem „Namen“ des Staates völlig reaktionär. Das Wir der Gemeinschaft muss auf *Identität und Differenz* und nicht auf reiner Zugehörigkeit gegründet werden.

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Gemeinsame Verpflichtungen entstehen auf verschiedene Weise und die individuelle Zustimmung der Mitglieder wird oft, jedoch nicht immer das Mittel. Wenn eine solche Gruppe die Verpflichtung eingeht, etwas zu tun, dann sind ihre Mitglieder aufgrund ihrer gemeinsamen Verpflichtung auch individuell dazu gezwungen, das gleiche zu tun. Und die aus der Erfüllung der Pflichten entstandene Solidarität ist völlig überpersönlich, im dem Sinne dass ich kein anderes Mitglied der Gemeinschaft kennen muss, obwohl ich die Bedingung erfüllen muss, mit ihm einen gemeinsamen Glauben, ein gemeinsames Vertrauen, das im Notstand aufkommen mag, zu teilen.

Also erst die gemeinsamen Verpflichtungen bilden gemeinsame Intentionen. Deswegen beschreibe ich sie als vermittelte Intentionen. Denn sie bedürfen den Notstand, um vermittelt zu werden, der aber nicht notwendig einen politischen Akt (d. i. Krieg) erfordern muss, sondern es reicht aus, dass ein sozialer Akt, d. h. die Solidarität der Mitglieder der Gemeinschaft (z. B. bei Naturkatastrophen) verlangt wird. Hegel hat einen großen Teil der abschließenden Paragraphen seiner Rechtsphilosophie der Argumentation gewidmet, dass Kriege, ebenso wie Naturkatastrophen, zu einer höheren und stärkeren Solidarität einerseits unter den Bürgern und andererseits zwischen den Bürgern und dem Staat führen. Brand verweist darauf (Brand 2005: 55), dass der Solidaritätsschub an den Heimatfronten im Zweiten Weltkrieg durch die Gemeinschaftserlebnisse wie etwa katastrophalen Naturereignissen ähnelnden Flächenbombardements aufgekommen war.<sup>8</sup>

7 Das bedeutet selbstverständlich nicht, dass die Genossen zu Volksgenossen gegen alle fremdvölkischen Personen wurden, wie im Nationalsozialismus der Fall war, obwohl das nationalsozialistische System „sich nicht nur durch Terror, sondern eher noch durch ein System gegenseitiger Ansprüche“ (Brand 2005: 55) stabilisierte.

8 Vgl. die empirische Forschung über die Einwirkung des Krieges auf die Herausbildung inneren Solidaritätsgefühls in: Bauer et al 2014.



Die Konzeption der Identität des Rechts und der Pflicht in der Gemeinschaft stütze ich auf den zum Thema gemachten Ausführungen Hegels. Die konkrete Freiheit, die im Recht eines Staates verwirklicht ist, ist das Ziel der Intentionalität einer Gemeinschaft, weil ich Freiheit hegelianisch als Selbstbestimmung und Selbstverwirklichung verstehe. Diese These muss dann folgende Bedingungen erfüllen: (1) Rechte und Pflichten gründen im Begriff des freien Willens; (2) Respekt und Würde jedes Einzelnen sind im Grundrecht und der Pflicht, seine Freiheit zu verwirklichen, ausgedrückt; und (3) die Identität ist zu verstehen als Identität, die nur in dem, was Hegel den modernen Staat nennt, verwirklicht ist. Deswegen beschreibe ich die politische Bestimmung der Gemeinschaften als Verfassungspatriotismus, als Verhältnis des Zutrauens, der Verantwortung und nicht zuletzt der Aufopferung. Auch die Moralität und Pflichten gegenüber Anderen sind hier völlig sozial bestimmt. Denn die Moralität (das haben wir von Hegel gelernt) ist eine soziale: sie fängt mit Selbstlosigkeit an, mit der Anlehnung an etwas anderes als uns selbst.

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Wie bei den Vereinigungen so trifft man auch bei den Gemeinschaften auf die Existenz der autoritären Behörde. Denn die dem Staat zugeschriebene Aktion wird tatsächlich von der Behörde durchgeführt. Da alle sozialen Aktionen der autoritativen Behörde Repräsentationsakte sind, ergibt jeder durch die Behörde durchgeführte soziale Akt die Erschaffung von Rechten, Pflichten oder Ansprüchen auf die zu repräsentierende Kollektivität.

### III

An dieser Stelle möchte ich an eine These meiner Arbeit erinnern, dass die Solidarität nur für die Gruppen Geltung besitzt und dass sie nicht im Stande ist, ursprünglich und ohne äußerliche Beweggründe (Notstand) die gesamte Gesellschaft zu stabilisieren.<sup>9</sup> Wenn das wahr ist, dann wird es weittragende Konsequenzen für die politische Ontologie des Staates – als der Wichtigsten Form der Gestaltungen menschlicher Gemeinschaften – haben. Gerade mittels des Solidaritätsbegriffs lassen sich andersartige und ergiebige Einsichten in die Natur und Struktur des modernen Staates gewinnen.

9 Die gleiche Ansicht teilt auch Luhmann (1984: 90). Jede Rede von der Solidarität außerhalb der Interessengruppen (welche ich als Vereinigungen untersucht) bestimmt er als „Ideologie“ (Luhmann 1984: 91). Eine bestehende und reale Bedrohung einer Gemeinschaft zeigt jedoch, so glaube ich, dass eine feste und wirkliche Solidaritätsform auch außerhalb und oberhalb der Vereinigungsgruppen zu finden ist.

Der Begriff der Solidarität ist ursprünglich ein juristischer Terminus, der seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts in den allgemeinen Sprachgebrauch und in *Code civil* aufgenommen wurde (vgl. Brand 2005). Die französischen Revolutionäre haben bei ihrem Versuch der Identitätsbildung der gesamten Nation eine sittlich gebotene Solidarität anvisiert gehabt.<sup>10</sup> Als das Wichtigste bei diesem Versuch ergibt sich für diese Untersuchung die Tatsache, dass der revolutionäre Staat die früheren und innerhalb der einzelnen gesellschaftlichen Gruppen, Korporationen und Genossenschaften entwickelten Solidaritätsgestalten durch den nationalen Solidaritätsbegriff bekämpfte. Denn für die damaligen Korporationen – und das ist das gleiche, was ich für jede Form der Vereinigungen als richtig behaupte – hatten nicht staatliche Gesetze, sondern gemeinsam gefasste Verträge das Handeln innerhalb der Korporationen bestimmt. Für solche soziale Gruppen war nicht das *bonum commune* maßgebend, sondern das auf Konsensus aufgebaute gemeinsame Interesse. Korporationen sind als Staat im Staate beschrieben worden und wurden bereits 1791 mit der „Loi Le Chapelier“ abgeschafft: „Es gibt keine Korporation mehr im Staat. Es gibt nur noch das besondere Interesse jedes Einzelnen und das Allgemeininteresse.“ (Markov 1987: II, 158ff.)

Diese Tatsache schreibt zumindest die europäische Staatengeschichte bis zu unseren Tagen. Man muss allerdings anerkennen, dass dem modernen nationalen Staat gelungen ist, nicht nur die religiösen Konflikte und Bürgerkriege zu neutralisieren, sondern auch in bestimmtem Maße, die Marktwirtschaft zu regulieren und die ökonomische Unsicherheit und Ungerechtigkeit unter Kontrolle zu bringen. (vgl. Brunkhorst 2005). Und das alles hat der moderne Staat ohne die Vorbedingung einer bestehenden und strengen Solidarität zwischen den Bürgern erreicht. Das bedeutet aber nur, dass es den einzelnen Gruppen, die in einer Gemeinschaft zur Herrschaft gekommen sind, nicht möglich ist, die vererbten sozialen Institutionen vollständig zu ändern. Daher gilt immerhin die Differenzierung des Solidaritätsbegriffs in zwei Unterformen: (a) Solidarität als Kooperation mit dem Ziel, gemeinsame (aber zugleich partikuläre) Interessen durchzusetzen (Solidarität in Vereinigungen); und (b) Solidarität als altruistische und vor allem im Notstand geltende Verpflichtung gegenüber den Mitbürgern (Solidarität im Staate). Beide Solidaritätsgestalten aber stellen eine starke Gruppensolidarität

10 Vgl. Art. 2 des Kapitels über die Pflichten in der Verfassung vom 22. August 1795: „Nul n'est bon citoyen, s'il n'est bon fils, bon père, bon frère, bon ami, bon époux.“ ([http://ledroitcriminel.free.fr/la\\_legislation\\_criminelle/textes\\_fondamentaux/declaration\\_droits\\_homme\\_22\\_08\\_1795.htm](http://ledroitcriminel.free.fr/la_legislation_criminelle/textes_fondamentaux/declaration_droits_homme_22_08_1795.htm)).

dar, welche erfordert, dass die Mitglieder das Gruppenethos promovieren und zusammen handeln. Die von allen Mitgliedern geteilten intentionalen Objekte der Solidarität sind Handeln und Wohlfahrt der Anderen. Obwohl Solidarität im Staate nur in einigen bestimmten Zeiten entsteht und ist weder immer anwesend noch durchgeführt, erfüllen diese beiden Formen der Solidarität das grundlegende Kriterium für die Gruppensolidarität, welche Raimo Tuomela auf folgende Weise zusammenfasst: „A group [...] is (*internally*) *solidary qua group* to the degree that it tends to satisfy and promote its ethos and thereby through its ethos to guide, ground, and contribute to its members' solidary actions qua members towards other members.“ (Tuomela 2013: 247) Das ist insbesondere sichtbar bei der Vereinigung, wenn sie nach dem „Kampf“ die Herrschaft in einer Gemeinschaft übernimmt. Deswegen behaupte ich im Unterschied zu Tuomela, dass „wholehearted group solidarity“ in solchen sozialen Gruppen anzutreffen ist, die in erster Linie - wie die Vereinigungen - durch „*rule-following group solidarity*“ charakterisiert sind (Tuomela 2013: 262).

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Wenn das oben vorgelegte richtig ist, dann lässt sich einsehen, warum sich Staaten als einzelne Gruppen voneinander absetzten und sich als solche gegenüberstehen und warum das *internationale* Recht noch immer in diesem „inter“ verweilt, d. h. im leeren Raum des Rechts. Man kann mit gutem Grund behaupten, dass Gruppensolidarität, gerade wegen dieser Solidarität selbst, zuerst in der Feindschaft gegen andere Gruppen resultiert. Das ist deshalb, weil Solidarität ein Wert und kein Prinzip ist, wie dies im Nationalsozialismus der Fall war, welches man auf jede Organisation anwenden kann. Darum bleibt Solidarität innerhalb der Grenzen derselben Werte. Wenn wir mit Brunkhorst einverstanden sind, dass sich heutzutage auf globalem Niveau die Rückkehr der durch den modernen Staat neutralisierten Herausforderungen beobachten lässt, dann führt der einzige Weg zu ihrer Aufhebung gerade durch die Herausbildung globaler Werte und der auf ihnen gegründeten Solidarität. Eine solche Solidarität soll alle räumlich oder geschichtlich gewachsenen Bestimmungen und Bedingungen ihrer Herausbildung außer Acht lassen und sich auf dem Begriff, auf der Idee tiefer begründen. Ohne irgendeine Territorialität und Bodenständigkeit haben die Juden trotz der höchsten Bedrohung, die einer sozialen „Gruppe“ widerfahren kann, ihre eigene Solidarität ausgebaut und durch sie ihre eigene Existenz bewahrt. Das sollte uns eventuell als Beispiel dafür dienen, auf welche Art und Weise sich heutzutage die politische Ontologie durchdenken lässt.

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Rastko Jovanov

Mimesis, Law, Struggle. A Contribution to Social Ontology

## Abstract

In this text, I begin from a brief presentation of Edith Stein's neglected theory of collective identity in contemporary social ontology, in order to, building on and resisting her conclusions, elaborate a new differentiation of various forms of collective identity. The thesis is that there are only three basic forms of communal living and action which have a feeling of collective belonging and solidarity, that is, collective identity: the masses, associations

(corporations) and communities. I go on to further develop their respective particularities through the use of the terms of mimesis, (established) law and struggle, and by using certain insights from Hegel regarding the nature of "objective spirit".

**Keywords:** Solidarity, Collective Identity, Mimesis, Law, Struggle, Mass, Corporation, Community, Edith Stein, Hegel

Rastko Jovanov

Mimezis, zakon, borba. Prilog socijalnoj ontologiji

Rezime

U ovom radu ću poći od kratkog prikaza zapostavljenje teorije kolektivnog identiteta Edit Štajn u savremenoj socijalnoj ontologiji da bih, nadovezujući se i suprotstavljajući se njenim rezultatima, izložio novu diferenciju različitih oblika kolektivnog identiteta. Teza je da postoje samo tri osnovna oblika zajedničkog življenja i delanja i kojima je pripadan osećanje kolektivne pripadnosti i solidarnosti, tj. kolektivnog identiteta: mase, udruženja (korporacije) i zajednice. U nastavku izlažem njihove osobenosti putem pojmova mimezisa, (uspostavljenog) zakona i borbe, i uz pomoć određenih Hegelovih uvida u prirodu „objektivnog duha“.

**Ključne reči:** Solidarnost, kolektivni identitet, mimezis, zakon, borba, masa, udruženje, zajednica, Edit Štajn, Hegel

Gazela Pudar Draško

## (Re)acting Together: Grexit as Revival of Intellectuals

**Abstract** *The paper explores the messages of engaged global intellectuals in the case of Grexit, the case of Greek attempt to break up with neoliberal practices and produce a left turn in politics and society, which was followed worldwide. How their words contribute to the general understanding (if there is one) and change (if there should be change)? What kind of action we can expect from intellectuals, as it is intrinsic to the concept? The issues examined in this paper deal with the intellectuals as bearers of articulating social critique, focusing on the specific Greek case in the time of temptations.*

**Keywords:** *global intellectuals, Grexit, action, critique*

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### Introduction

The question of action and human agency often points towards intellectuals. Readiness to act can be understood as one of four main components of the concept of intellectual, together with knowledge, authority and the public. The concept of intellectual used to be and still is the place of polemical discussion and interpretations. In addition, the concept is often strongly based in normative or moralistic justification, where theorists “criticize what intellectuals do and make a case for what they ought to do” (Brym, 2015: 277).

Separating the content of the two intertwined concepts – the intellectual and intelligentsia – proves difficult, but necessary. I will, therefore, focus here on the idea of an intellectual as a social actor who has developed intellectual authority on the basis of achievements and/or appointments in the field of cultural (knowledge) production, and who uses that authority when acting in the public on the various topics, regardless of whether they are expert or not for those topics. This definition, borrowed from Collini (2002: 2006), and slightly adjusted, encompasses all four elements mentioned at the beginning. According to this view, intellectuals are atomized actors originating in intelligentsia whose achievements and appointments demonstrate their established authority in the public, but whose collective or group consciousness and collective action need not to be inherent to the concept of intellectual as such. It is important to say that this definition does not presuppose any value based judgement on the intellectual action, as intellectuals can act on different sides of ideological spectre.

The issues examined in this paper deal with the intellectuals as bearers of articulating social critique, critique directed towards most important social questions, which are global in scope. Strong interconnectedness of social processes on the global level even provoked discussions on the issue whether society, as it is traditionally understood, still exists as solid and unique concept (ie. Latour, 2005). These claims leave little space for nation/state considerations. Action becomes global nowadays and intellectuals become global actors, if it is at all possible to say that their action was national in the first place.

In this paper I will seek to explore what is the actual potential of engaged intellectuals. How their words contribute to the general understanding (if there is one) and change (if there should be change)? What kind of action we can expect from intellectuals, as it is intrinsic to the concept? I will try to offer answers to these questions, observing *global* intellectual actions in the case of Grexit, the case of Greek attempt to break up with neoliberal practices and produce a left turn in politics and society, which was followed worldwide.

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### **Why intellectuals count?**

The intellectuals are frequently seen as supposedly independent, neutral or socially rootless actors<sup>1</sup>. This notion is at least partially coming from intellectuals themselves, who continue to directly or indirectly spread elements of such paradigm in order to legitimize their own authority in the eyes of the public. The understanding that intellectuals earnestly engage with mundane daily issues and have oppositional attitudes to the existing order and systems of power relations has dominated the sociology of intellectuals. The epithets of independence and rootlessness are often, and mostly unjustifiably, attributed to intellectuals. As Collini rightfully says, the independence of intellectuals was always a desired state-of-art that is projected on the “some others somewhere else”, because we ourselves are interrelated and interdependent in multiple ways: “somehow survives the fantasy that someone else, somewhere else, can escape from worldly circumstances and ascend to the heights of being real intellectual” (Collini, 2002: 214).

But, how do intellectuals engage? Do they engage in such a way that they interfere in the state affairs and politics, either supporting or resisting

1 For clarity sake, intellectuals/intelligentsia as a group were seen as or free-floating, socially rootless (Mannheim, Said), or embedded into class structure (Gramsci, Bourdieu), or as a part of the specific class (middle or upper), although there were theories on the intellectuals as a unique class (Djilas, Szelenyi, Gouldner).

them, or do they engage indirectly through broadly defined socio-cultural processes and spheres (such as education, art, science) and maintain the existing political discourse or do they introduce elements of discourse which would have the power to become a political discourse one day – I claim that this is the key issue of intellectual engagement in general.

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The question of engagement and independence of intellectuals was substantially elaborated in the work of Edward Said, particularly in his *Reith lectures* (1993) on representation of the intellectual. Said believed that the key role of intellectuals was to challenge and defeat invisible tentacles of power and to question entrenched norms arising from such power (Said, 1996; Said, 2002). He himself could be described as the globally engaged intellectual who embodied those ideals he had set, but he could also be used as an example of intellectual naiveté, where the freedom of intellectuals is overestimated. An intellectual should amount to alternative narratives and different historical perspective in relation to those offered by defenders of the official memory, those who manipulate demonized or distorted presentation of adverse and/or excluded populations. Said's view here points out to the kind of action which resembles a Benda's sort of "treason" (Benda, 1996). Said particularly emphasizes the importance of the role of intellectuals in the struggle for peace, social justice and redistribution of resources. Intellectuals must be able to handle words in such a way that they reach out to the public and cause controversy and discussions. Intellectual consciousness is sceptical, engaged, tirelessly devoted to rational investigation and moral judgment. For Said, engagement and action is always action from aside, of someone who is capable to see things from above and more than others. Doubtless, his own experience of an intellectual without roots and who was stranger everywhere left a strong mark on his belief in intellectuals' role. This was vision of intellectual as it ought to be and ought to act, vision offering positive impact on society, which I find idealistic.

However, the idea of intellectuals as actors having irreplaceable role of critical voice in contemporary society is not universally shared. Many theorists (notably Bauman, Jacoby, Posner) claimed that intellectuals (almost) disappeared, grounding their views primarily in two lines of arguments. First line of argumentation relies on idea that knowledge specialization atomizes the intellectual space, which makes it difficult to build intellectual authority as a prerequisite for intellectual action. Second line of argumentation considers intellectual action to become less and less important in mediatized societies which cultivates the production



of celebrities, and where, by inference, all have a say and no one truly has it (Collini, 2006: 451).

Russell Jacoby points to the inability of intellectuals as freelance thinkers to act in contemporary societies. He argues that intellectuals are being contained almost exclusively in the sphere of academy, where the processes of institutionalization of science, theory and research significantly enabled and increased their integration in the social power structures and thus dulled their critical edge. Even the “new left intellectuals” seek tenure and limit their scope of intellectual action to professional audience (Jacoby, 1987). Posner goes even further, by saying:

“The growth in specialization of knowledge has made it extremely difficult for even highly educated people to evaluate the claims made by public intellectuals. (...) The public protects itself against the high variance and low average quality of public-intellectual work mostly by not taking it very seriously” (Posner, 2001: 388).

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Both views precede the advent of crisis in 2008. Indeed, global developments prior to it, lead to a conclusion that intellectual was no longer needed, as it seemed that Francis Fukuyama’s paradigm of the “end of history” had triumphed, which left little room for any alternative vision of societal and political order. The triumph of neoliberal concept led to a weakening or even disappearance of alternatives, which favoured the expansion of the paradigm of the intellectual decline and the shrinking of the importance of intellectual action in general.

It is, however, possible to reconcile these two approaches, at least partially. Ralph Dahrendorf, whose understanding of the intellectual role is in a certain sense applicable to the position elaborated in this paper, explained in his lecture and later paper on the intellectuals in the age of totalitarianism (Dahrendorf, 2008), that intellectual shines in the times of temptation. Crisis and temptations put intellectuals in focus, as they are expected to take intellectual and even political leadership, or at least point out the directions of desirable changes. Dahrendorf further explains that the virtues of the intellectual are: 1) the courage to champion the cause of freedom, 2) to cultivate the passion of reason, 3) his or her ability to live with contradictions and 4) position of the engaged observer in society. All these virtues are subject to discussion, as they apparently recall Edward Said’s expectations from the intellectual.

I argue that this thesis about intellectuals as important actors in times of temptations is fairly compatible with the recent theories that proclaim

the fall or even death of the intellectual. Quiet everyday life of society, not characterized with commotion and turmoil, leaves no space for significant intellectual action, according to Dahrendorf. In his view, great societal challenges put intellectuals in a specific position, giving them the influential role of the torchbearer. The twentieth century was an era of great “temptations”, and thus an era of intellectuals. Taking October Revolution as its departure point, the involvement in large and tragic events of the First and Second World Wars, the action of dissidents in real-socialist Eastern European societies behind the iron curtain, the intellectuals were a voice that was vocal, although it is questionable whether it was really ever listened to<sup>2</sup>. After the fall of Berlin wall, the role of intellectuals has been minimized, and this is the period when the theories of the “fall” of intellectuals were becoming dominant, and in the line with the “end of history” paradigm.

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The outburst of the economic and societal crisis in 2008, created structural preconditions for the “return of intellectual”, with the return, to re-phrase Dahrendorf, of the time of temptations. The quest for the new paradigm has begun, and the first protagonists of the new intellectual action were to be found among economists. For example, in his global bestseller *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Thomas Piketty (Piketty, 2014) promoted the intellectual as an actor who can enlighten in the times of turmoil of global society and offer alternative<sup>3</sup>.

The quest for new paradigm, different from neoliberal ideology, soon found the new protagonists in Greece. Massive attention of global audience was directed to the Greek economic and political crisis during 2015. Despite the fact that Greece has been facing substantial debt crisis followed by economic recession for almost 6 years, events in 2015, before the referendum on austerity measures imposed by Greek’s creditors in 2010, appeared to be ground-breaking. The referendum was seen as the first step towards Greek exit from Eurozone and even European Union, which was popularized by the name of “Grexit”. The Grexit story began with the rise of the left anti-austerity oriented block of parties (*Syriza*), which managed to win parliamentary elections in January 2015. Since

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2 The scope of the influence of the intellectuals, even the most prominent among them, is a subject to potential future research. As intellectuals do not act from the positions of the embodied political power, nor they act as representatives of capitalist oligarchy, it is not easy to operationalize their influence and authority. Therefore, their influence is usually considered, but often not evidence based.

3 It is also questionable whether Piketty’s book offered new alternative, or it is still employs the concepts of the existing paradigm of welfare state.

then and after establishing the openly leftist government, Syriza was trying to refuse imposed austerity measures and to get more favourable debt repayment agreement with financial institutions. During the pre-referendum period, Greek government was using different strategies and instruments, some of which were widely disputed as populist and unrealistic.

Crucially for the paper, Greek resistance against the global system, characterized as unjust and favouring strong and rich nations/states, provoked substantial left-oriented endeavours to foreground the final stages of neoliberal paradigm and the ultimate need for radical changes. We were witnesses of the extensive intellectual action, where intellectuals played the role of actors offering the detailed analysis and even possible pathways for the solution of the Greek crisis. This action proves Dahrendorf's thesis that intellectuals are important actors in times of temptations. Apart from that, Grexit was also an attempt of the Left to offer alternative, to re-emerge from marginality by creating actions in places where it managed to seize power. In spite of disappointment and apparent failure of the Greek Left to provide a real, tenable alternative, a different viable paradigm, by remaining trapped within the global developments in which capitalism still dominates in its neoliberal guise, the Grexit proved to be a moment when the intellectuals shone. I will now try to elaborate the scope and the content of this intellectual action, pointing out the key messages, based on the online media representation during the three months of 2015.

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### **What was the focus?**

As intellectual action in public can take various forms, researching those actions can be a durable process which presents many challenges, connected to definition who is intellectual, how to grasp their action etc. In this paper the focus was on the selected international newspaper articles, opinions and other forms of action publicized during the considered period, embodying the intellectual reaction to Greek crisis in the international online newspapers and portals. Therefore, convenient sampling was used to select the available materials and offer initial hypotheses for further investigation. Analysis is based on 28 articles of global intellectuals published in English language on portals of *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Politico*, *The Nation*, but also *Analyze Greece*, *Open Democracy* and several other channels<sup>4</sup>.

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4 See appendix.

The research itself was stimulated by several reactions of prominent intellectuals, hereby called global intellectuals due to their attempted global action and their global public (more in Nagy-Zekmi, Hollis, 2012). Probably, the most important among them was the petition published under the title “Greeks, don’t give in to the EU’s austerity ultimatum”, signed by more than 70 intellectuals, including Etienne Balibar, Immanuel Wallerstein, Judith Butler, Alain Badiou, Chantal Mouffe, and many others. Having so many prominent intellectuals raising their voice in Greek case led to assumption that is motif of this paper – intellectuals stepped again vigorously into public and called for attention from the decision makers. In the following paragraphs I will show what they called attention for.

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### **What are intellectuals standing for?**

Generally, the public stance of the intellectuals in the case of Grexit is already a bold statement. I therefore wanted to explore what is their engagement in this matter, or more precisely what are the messages they wanted to send. I will try to emphasize those elements of intellectual discourse which can give overview of the key messages, and to identify whether they see themselves as social actors which could play a role in activities they propose.

The first glance at the corpus already made it clear that critical voice dominates strongly over the attempt of the so called “Troika” to impose further austerity measures on Greece. Second, when reading the articles in this sample, the reader can easily sympathize with the Greek people and take the Greek stand. Third, the atmosphere described in these articles calls for immediate action, which would relieve “unconscionable torture of the present” where we hear “the rising crescendo of bickering and acrimony within Europe” (Stiglitz, 2015a). This is backed by a sense that “social democracy is a political corpse in Europe today, it no longer exists” (Balibar in Mavroeidis, Varoucha, 2015) and “there’s a definite 1914 feeling to what’s happening, a sense that pride, annoyance, and sheer miscalculation are leading Europe off a cliff it could and should have avoided” (Krugman, 2015e).

The most frequent message transmitted was about “failure”. This word acted prominently in 14 out of 28 articles, although almost all articles could be examined as an analysis of the European failure. Habermas judges that “the current crisis can be explained both through economic causes and political *failure*” (Oltermann, 2015). Krugman recognizes that

“the troika’s program for Greece represents one of history’s epic policy *failures*. Even if you ignore the economic and human toll, it was an utter *failure* in terms of restoring solvency” (Krugman, 2015b). Therefore, it came without surprise that “the population rejects the continuation of a policy whose drastic *failure* is something they have experienced at first hand” (Habermas, 2015; *italics mine*).

The failure is attributed to Europe, which usually works as a euphemism for European Union. Europe failed to recognize and apply its core values, as “the de facto relegation of a member state to the status of a protectorate openly contradicts the democratic principles of the European Union” (Habermas in Oltermann, 2015). In the petition that gathered so many influential intellectuals, they claim that “the lenders, however, insisted on the continuation of their *failed* recipe, refused to discuss a writedown of the debt – which the IMF is on record as considering unviable – and finally, on 26 June, issued an ultimatum to Greece by means of a non-negotiable package that would entrench austerity” (Anonym, 2015b).

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In this game of thrones, the most significant Other is not the European Union, although it is most frequently mentioned, just as it is the so-called Troika. Even when these international institutions are mentioned, the reader has impression that they are ruled by the dominant political and economic force in Europe. It is Germany which is recognized as inexplicably stubborn, with obvious lack of solidarity and political sensitivity. Habermas states that “yet the *German* government did just this [*creating more damage*] when finance minister Schaeuble threatened Greek exit from the euro, thus unashamedly revealing itself as *Europe’s chief disciplinarian*. The *German* government thereby made for the first time a manifest claim for *German* hegemony in Europe – this, at any rate, is how things are perceived in the rest of Europe, and this perception defines the reality that counts” (Oltermann, 2015; *italics mine*). Such behaviour cannot pass without consequences, as he fears that “the *German* government, including its social democratic faction, has gambled away in one night all the political capital that a better *Germany* had accumulated in half a century – and by ‘better’ I mean a *Germany* characterised by greater political sensitivity and a post-national mentality” (ibid). Amartya Sen is cited when comparing “the austerity policy pushed through by the federal *German* government with a medicine that contains a toxic mixture of antibiotics and rat poison” (Habermas, 2015).

Also, moderately often, they name European technocrats as the actor to be blamed for imposing the measures, since they do not possess sufficient

political vision or courage to face the problem in its profundity. European technocrats' insisting on the austerity measures and their behaviour in general is described as scandalous, especially since they avoid to even consider normative aspect of the Greek crisis and possible reform of the system inside the European Union. Slavoj Žižek therefore claims that, as the Greek officials "talk as if they are part of an open political process where decisions are ultimately 'ideological' (based on normative preferences), the EU *technocrats* talk as if it is all a matter of detailed regulatory measures", masking that these "purely expert regulatory measures are effectively grounded in politico-ideological decisions" (Žižek, 2015a). This camouflaging hides the situation which is the source of fear for several intellectuals: behind the administrative doors, a muffled cancellation of democracy takes place, transferring the power from democratic institutions to circles which are out of control of European citizens. As Žižek points out, "this passage from politics proper to neutral expert administration characterises our entire political process: strategic decisions based on power are more and more masked as administrative regulations based on neutral expert knowledge, and they are more and more negotiated in secrecy and enforced without democratic consultation" (ibid). It is this "late capitalism" which "depends on the neutralisation of democracy" (Douzinas, 2015), which contradicts the principle of social justice praised as the core European value, together with democracy and solidarity.

The urge to refuse the "toxic" measures is another key message. It is the "diktat from Europe's reactionary governments", led by "the irresponsible suggestions of extremist ideologues", which shows "extremely savage reaction to Syriza", where "an act of monstrous folly on the part of the creditor governments and institutions to push it to this point" leads into "a cycle of ever-worse pain without hope". Krugman insists that these measures serve as "pure vindictiveness, complete destruction of national sovereignty, and no hope of relief... it's a grotesque betrayal of everything the European project was supposed to stand for" (Krugman, 2015f). Greek people are "exposed to the injuries of poverty, shrinkage of public spaces and services, demoralization, and racism" while creditors "relentlessly came up with new onerous, punitive demands, including demands for additional cuts in the social security and pension system", seeking to "confirm the 'there is no alternative' neoliberal doctrine" (Athanasίου, 2015).

The action of the creditors is seen as the worldwide lecture in power and (non)democracy, more than in economy. The crisis revealed the perception of Eurozone as incompatible with popular sovereignty, since it is

observed as “the economic model (...) predicated on power relationships that disadvantaged workers” (Stiglitz, 2015a). It is exactly the fear of the left movement and social democratic policies which caused such brutal reaction. “The fear of political contagion is the only credible interpretation of the actions of Europeans and the IMF”, claims Costas Douzinas (2015), while Noam Chomsky speaks openly of the class war and of the eroding the welfare state (Chomsky, 2015). “The campaign of bullying – the attempt to terrify Greeks by cutting off bank financing and threatening general chaos, all with the almost open goal of *pushing the current leftist government out of office* – was a shameful moment in a Europe that claims to believe in democratic principles”, says Krugman (2015a; italics mine).

This political turn, this overt abandoning of the social policies of the welfare state, has been seen as the ultimate defeat of the leftists. Not that left idea failed, but those supposed-to-be left parties failed to stand against harsh austerity, causing much more damage to the overall leftist movement. As Badiou points out: the European Left does no longer exist. “European ‘Left’ has sunk into an irreversible coma. François Hollande? German Social Democracy? Spain’s PSOE? PASOK in Greece? The Labour Party? All these parties are now overtly the managers of globalised capitalism” (Badiou, 2015). Left seems to be disorganized, lacking political unity and closed off within national borders, impotent, without real international initiative which can bring pressure to the globalized capitalist oligarchy which is well organized and have concentrated power in its hands.

The mourning of the Left, international but also national, reveals the values of global intellectuals and their understanding of Europe. Europe should be all about “justice, equality, and solidarity” (Athanasίου, 2015), “based on democracy, social justice and human rights” (Anonym, 2015c), since it should represent heritage of “democracy, trust in people, egalitarian solidarity” (Žižek, 2015a). In the aforementioned petition signed by so many intellectuals, it is specified that the European Union should clearly build on “values of the enlightenment – equality, justice, solidarity – and to the principles of democracy on which its legitimacy rests” (Anonym, 2015b). Greece, as the cradle of Western democracy is symbolically important here, for restoring the faith in Europe and its described values. “So long as you have a brain in your head and care at all about the future of Europe, you will understand why we must save Greece”, exclaims Timothy Garton Ash (2015a).

Ideals shared by the intellectuals reflect to a great extent the values they emphasize. It is by no means democracy which is unquestionable value

for all. True democracy to be achieved capitalism has to be bridled while power needs to be re-distributed in order to bring back voice to the demos. Possible pathways in this process range from moderate political measures to those framed as radical. Stiglitz emphasize inclusive capitalism as “the antithesis of what the troika is creating – the only way to create shared and sustainable prosperity” (Stiglitz, 2015c). Douzinas, on the other hand, sees the way out in radical democracy, pictured in Syntagma Square occupation (2011), which could “place the people at the centre of politics and prefigure an institutional framework in which direct democracy becomes a permanent supplement to its representative part” (Douzinas, 2015). Ultimate value for Douzinas is social justice, which represents a corrective to the market distribution system.

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Habermas sees the alternative in strengthening the currency union/Euro-zone and European structures, which would be the result of a true “change in political direction, brought about by democratic majorities in a more strongly integrated ‘core Europe’”, which is inevitable process in globalized world (Oltermann, 2015). In another article, he continues that “the citizens, not the banks,... must retain the final say in existential questions for Europe” (Habermas, 2015). Etienne Balibar offers quite a similar route, when he emphasizes that “nations clearly do have to abandon some of their exclusive sovereignty, insofar as today this is only a myth, which has been replaced in practice by a shared sovereignty” (Mavroedidis, Varoucha, 2015). However, in his view nation states figure as the key actors, which “must also gain something from this in exchange, for example in terms of solidarity and equality” (ibid).

Finally, apart from the messages they wanted to convey, what interested me the most was how the intellectuals operationalize their own role and their place in building the European path in the line with their values. In all observed articles, there is only one direct call for intellectual action, which itself lacks elaboration. The researchers of European Union Institute positioned themselves in the open letter as those who need to defend the public interest and the right of people to decide on future of European peoples. “As researchers, committed to knowledge and public interest, we have to take a stand. We can no longer contribute to the reproduction of policies and mentalities of fear. We defend the opportunity given to the Greek people to decide on its own future, and we offer our full solidarity and active cooperation to with them in these difficult moments” (Anonym, 2015c). This petition calls for cooperation and delegitimization of the existing policies among and with intellectuals, but also with other societal actors.



In general, intellectuals' propensity to act is limited to production of the critical analysis and eventual advising which could direct action of other actors. However, one has to take into consideration that this analysis is based solely on articles/contributions and it doesn't observe eventual actions of intellectuals not recorded here.

## Conclusion

"The reality of European democracy remains national (...)", says Timoty Garton Ash "most people in Europe still get the bulk of their news and views from national media – even when there is a shared language" (2015b). It could be argued with almost certain probability that the national overviews of affairs would offer completely different picture of what local intellectual cliques and individuals stand for, with a broad variety of internal clashes from whence other perspectives on Grexit also emerge.

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Despite this fact, the analysis of what I here referred to as the "global discourse" emerged during the peak of the Greek crisis, demonstrated that the public reflection in globalized online media offers a global intellectual perspective which is by all means describable as the leftist perspective. Strong sympathies for Greece and support to the Greek governmental policy were unanimous. Let us recall Posner's question about whether intellectuals influence the public, or the public selects intellectuals on the basis of some of its structurally conditioned preferences (Posner, 2001). This might lead to the claim that global public is more international and left oriented, compared to the national publics. Such conclusion is limited by type of the sample used in the presented research. Nevertheless, the thesis about the strong connection between left orientation and usage of the globalized media would be interesting for further analysis, which would go beyond intellectuals as the target sample.

The temptation era (still unfinished), where Greek referendum acted as its summit, for the time being, did signify the willingness of intellectuals to engage, to react, to offer perspectives. We could conclude that those perspectives revealed no new paradigms, and provided few alternatives to already existing leftist narratives. However, the potential Grexit brought to light has given us at least three massive initiatives of the intellectuals, through petitions and open letters. These initiatives indicated the readiness to act together (Anonym, 2015b; 2015c; 2015d). It is precisely this acting together which could be seen as a necessary step towards putting more pressure on other global actors – capitalist oligarchy whose influence on governments and international institutions is all too powerful.

Intellectual role is to provide potential actors, political or otherwise, with paradigms and ideas which can serve as the basis for a renewed or a new social order.

Deleuze's paragraph on the purpose of theory seems appropriate for the end of this article: "It must be useful. It must function. And not for itself. If no one uses it, beginning with the theoretician himself (who then ceases to be a theoretician), then theory is worthless or the moment is inappropriate" (*Intellectuals and power*, 1972).

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Gazela Pudar Draško

Zajedničko delanje: Grexit kao povratak intelektualaca

Rezime

U radu se istražuje poruke angažovanih globalnih intelektualaca u slučaju Grexita, grčkog pokušaja da se raskine sa neoliberalnim praksama i krene nalevo u politici i društvu, koji je izazvao veliku pažnju širom sveta. Kako njihove reči doprinose opštem razumevanju (ako postoji) i promeni (ako postoji potreba za promenom)? Kakav tip delanja možemo da očekujemo od intelektualaca, imajući u vidu da je delanje suštinski deo koncepta? Rad se bavi intelektualcima, kao nosiocima artikulisanja društvene kritike, sa fokusom na konkretnom slučaju Grčke u vremenu iskušenja.

**Ključne reči:** globalni intelektualci, Grexit, delanje, kritika

Igor Krtolica

## Science et philosophie chez Gilles Deleuze

**Résumé** *Deleuze n'attendra pas la fin de son œuvre pour formuler une théorie du rapport de la philosophie et de la science. Les premières formulations de ce problème apparaissent dès les années 1950-1960, dans les études sur Bergson et Nietzsche, puis dans Différence et répétition et Logique du sens. Il est vrai que cette question sera reprise en détail en 1991, dans Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ? Mais du début à la fin de l'œuvre, l'idée directrice ne changera pas. Cette idée nous paraît comporter trois aspects principaux : 1° dans une polémique contre l'héritage épistémologique néokantien, elle consiste d'abord à refuser la définition critique de la philosophie comme « réflexion sur la connaissance scientifique », et à lui substituer une conception inspirée de l'ontologie expressionniste de Bergson, qui répartit la science et la philosophie sur les deux moitiés de l'être ; 2° dans un effort pour réhabiliter le concept de dialectique, elle consiste ensuite à faire de la dialectique des Idées la sphère commune à la science et à la philosophie ; 3° enfin, dans le but de spécifier chaque forme de pensée, elle consiste à déterminer la manière dont chacune exprime ses Idées ou ses problèmes dans des signes propres. Ces trois aspects nous semblent définir le cadre le plus général de la conception deleuzienne du rapport de la science et de la philosophie. Nous les examinons ici successivement, en tenant compte exclusivement de la première période de l'œuvre de Deleuze, c'est-à-dire des ouvrages pré-quattariens.*

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**Mots-clés** : Deleuze, philosophie, science, dialectique, Idée, problème

Deleuze n'attendra pas la fin de son œuvre pour formuler une théorie du rapport de la philosophie et de la science. Les premières formulations de ce problème apparaissent dès les années 1950-1960, dans les études sur Bergson et Nietzsche, puis dans *Différence et répétition* et *Logique du sens*. Il est vrai que cette question sera reprise en détail en 1991, dans *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?* Mais du début à la fin de l'œuvre, l'idée directrice ne changera pas. Cette idée nous paraît comporter trois aspects principaux : 1° dans une polémique contre l'héritage épistémologique néokantien, elle consiste d'abord à refuser la définition critique de la philosophie comme « réflexion sur la connaissance scientifique », pour lui substituer une conception inspirée de l'ontologie expressionniste de Bergson, qui répartit la science et la philosophie sur chacune des deux moitiés de l'absolu ou de l'être ; 2° dans un effort pour réhabiliter le concept de dialectique, elle consiste ensuite à faire de la dialectique des Idées ou des problèmes la sphère commune à la science et à la philosophie, l'élément autonome dans lequel elles puisent toutes les deux ; 3° enfin, dans le but

de spécifier chaque forme de pensée, elle consiste à déterminer la manière dont chacune exprime ses Idées ou ses problèmes dans des signes propres, les théories scientifiques d'un côté et les concepts philosophiques de l'autre. Ces trois aspects nous semblent définir le cadre le plus général de la conception deleuzienne du rapport de la science et de la philosophie. Nous les examinerons ici successivement, en nous attachant exclusivement à la première période de l'œuvre de Deleuze, c'est-à-dire aux ouvrages pré-guattariens.

## **1/ Le dualisme expressionniste, ou les deux tendances de l'être**

### *a/ le rejet de la définition néokantienne de la philosophie*

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La conception deleuzienne du rapport science-philosophie consiste d'abord, négativement, à refuser la définition critique de la philosophie, c'est-à-dire l'idée selon laquelle la philosophie serait une réflexion sur la connaissance scientifique. Témoignage de la puissance de l'héritage épistémologique kantien en Allemagne et en France (néokantisme, Cercle de Vienne, épistémologie française), cette définition soumet en effet la philosophie et la science à une alternative fâcheuse : si la philosophie est réflexion sur la connaissance scientifique, ou bien la philosophie passe au service des sciences qui ont seules le pouvoir de connaître objectivement quelque chose, ou bien elle prétend régner sur elles du fait qu'elle en est la conscience éveillée. Alors, suivant la tendance adoptée, on insistera tantôt sur les limites de la philosophie, qui ne peut accéder aux choses en soi et doit se contenter de réfléchir les conditions de nos connaissances objectives, tantôt à l'inverse sur le privilège que possède la connaissance philosophique, celui de fouler le domaine transcendantal qui se refuse à la science. Mais dans les deux cas, qu'elle soit servante ou bien reine, la philosophie reste définie par la réflexion. Or, aux yeux de Deleuze, cette définition soulève au moins deux difficultés : d'une part, si la philosophie était ainsi définie, il faudrait nécessairement que la capacité de réflexion soit en même temps retirée à la science, idée absurde qui témoigne d'un certain mépris pour la pensée scientifique ; et d'autre part, sous couvert d'accorder un grand privilège à la philosophie, une telle définition lui ôte en réalité l'originalité de son rapport aux choses et de sa création propre. Dans *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?*, Deleuze et Guattari affirmeront ainsi : « Elle n'est pas réflexion, parce que personne n'a besoin de philosophie pour réfléchir sur quoi que ce soit : on croit donner beaucoup à la philosophie en en faisant l'art de la réflexion,

mais on lui retire tout, car les mathématiciens comme tels n'ont jamais attendu les philosophes pour réfléchir sur les mathématiques, ni les artistes sur la peinture ou la musique ; dire qu'ils deviennent alors philosophes est une mauvaise plaisanterie, tant leur réflexion appartient à leur création respective » (Deleuze et Guattari 1991 : 11).

Ces deux idées – que la réflexion n'est pas réservée à la philosophie et que la philosophie possède une relation originale aux choses – Deleuze les avait déjà formulées dans les années 1950, à propos de Bergson. On sait que le refus de la définition épistémologique de la philosophie animait déjà la réaction de Heidegger au néokantisme marbourgeois. Au colloque de Davos en 1929, Heidegger prétendait en effet substituer une interprétation ontologique de Kant à la lecture épistémologique qu'en proposait Cassirer<sup>1</sup>. Si rien n'indique que Deleuze ait connu la lettre de ce texte, il est évident qu'il n'en ignorait pas l'esprit. Car cette interprétation, Heidegger l'avait développée dans son *Kantbuch*. Deleuze partageait certainement avec Heidegger l'effort de réorientation de la philosophie en direction de la métaphysique ou de l'ontologie. Pourtant, comment expliquer que ce soit Bergson plutôt que Heidegger qui anime sa réaction contre la conception néokantienne de la philosophie ? C'est premièrement que, chez Bergson, la question ne porte pas sur le primat de la science ou de la philosophie quant à la connaissance et à la pensée, mais d'abord sur leurs relations respectives aux choses (dont le problème de la connaissance et de la pensée ne fait que découler). Or, pour Deleuze, la philosophie a bien une relation originale aux choses, une relation directe et non réflexive, qui implique l'intuition ou la pensée pure ; en découle son mode de connaissance spécifique, qui est une connaissance conceptuelle des choses dans leur singularité, visant l'identité du concept et de l'individu. En 1956, dans une présentation de Bergson destinée à l'encyclopédie sur *Les philosophes célèbres*, Deleuze écrit ainsi : « La philosophie n'a jamais répondu que de deux manières à une telle question, sans doute parce qu'il n'y a que deux réponses possibles : une fois dit que la science nous donne une connaissance des choses, qu'elle est donc dans un certain rapport avec elles, la philosophie peut renoncer à rivaliser avec la science, elle peut lui laisser les choses, et se présenter seulement d'une manière critique comme une réflexion sur cette connaissance que nous en avons. Ou bien, au contraire, la philosophie prétend instaurer, ou plutôt restaurer, une autre relation avec les choses, donc une autre

1 Cf. Cassirer 1972 : 28–29. Sur la mise en œuvre de ce programme, cf. Heidegger 1953 et 1958. Voir encore Beaufret : 1974 : 26–49.

connaissance, connaissance et relation que la science précisément nous cachait, dont elle nous privait, parce qu'elle nous permettait seulement de conclure et d'inférer sans jamais nous présenter, nous donner la chose en elle-même. C'est dans cette deuxième voie que Bergson s'engage en répudiant les philosophies critiques » (Deleuze 2002 : 29-30). C'est deuxièmement que la solution bergsonienne permet d'éviter un danger que Deleuze ne semble pas vouloir courir avec Heidegger : l'instauration d'un privilège de la pensée philosophique sur la connaissance scientifique, d'un primat de la philosophie sur la science. La voie bergsonienne qu'emprunte Deleuze se présente comme dualiste et métaphysique : dualiste, parce qu'elle répartit la science et la philosophie sur deux plans réellement distincts, auxquels correspondent deux types de connaissance, directe et indirecte ; métaphysique, parce que la philosophie y est conçue comme une connaissance de l'être des choses, indépendamment de leur existence phénoménale actuelle. Cette voie définit l'ontologie expressionniste qui traverse toute l'œuvre de Deleuze. Mais comment cet expressionnisme définit-il la spécificité de la philosophie et de la science d'une part et évacue-t-il a priori tout primat de l'une sur l'autre ?

#### b/ une voie expressionniste, dualiste et métaphysique

Quant au rapport science-philosophie, Deleuze ne cache pas son penchant pour une voie dualiste et métaphysique. Un tel penchant se manifeste dans l'intérêt qu'il prête tant à la dialectique métamathématique de Platon qu'au passage de la science à la métaphysique chez Descartes. Son intérêt pour Platon a déjà fait l'objet de nombreux commentaires. En revanche, son intérêt pour Descartes (et non pas seulement pour la critique qu'en firent Spinoza et Leibniz) reste plus méconnu. Nous possédons pourtant une recension que Deleuze fit des travaux sur Descartes de Ferdinand Alquié (lequel fut son professeur à la fin des années 1940, puis devint le directeur de sa thèse complémentaire sur *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* parue en 1968). Or cette recension, contemporaine des articles sur Bergson, s'avère riche d'enseignements. Deleuze y souligne en effet la différence entre la représentation scientifique de la Nature et la présentation philosophique de l'Être : tandis que les idées qui portent sur la Nature, comme le triangle ou l'étendue, « sont des représentations par rapport auxquelles la pensée reste première », les idées métaphysiques, celles de l'âme ou de Dieu, sont au contraire « de véritables présences, qui témoignent de l'Être comme d'un autre ordre dans lequel la pensée est seconde ». Et dans toute sa recension, Deleuze ne cesse d'insister sur le dualisme cartésien qui sépare la Nature, déterminée



comme système spatial, actuel et mécanique, de l'Être, conçu comme fondement métaphysique : « Si la Nature n'est pas être, l'Être n'est pas nature, n'est pas scientifiquement compris, mais doit être philosophiquement conçu, comme distinct de tout objet, de toute essence, de tout mécanisme objectif. C'est ainsi que Descartes est amené à l'idée d'un fondement métaphysique, fondement de la science, mais à condition de sortir de la science ». Et Deleuze de conclure sa recension en affirmant que les commentaires d'Alquié montrent « une conception de la philosophie qu'il faut conserver, une pensée qui exprime l'essence même de la métaphysique » (Deleuze 1956 : 473-475)<sup>2</sup>. On objectera : si la différence entre la philosophie et la science se fonde sur la différence de plans entre l'Être et la Nature, entre l'ordre de la présence métaphysique et l'ordre dérivé de la représentation, en quoi la voie bergsonienne empruntée par Deleuze, également dualiste et métaphysique, diffère-t-elle de celle Descartes ? Ne pourrait-on pas dire que, toutes choses égales par ailleurs, une telle solution réactive le primat platonicien de la connaissance apodictique de la philosophie sur la connaissance simplement hypothétique de la science ? Ne faut-il pas dire alors que la voie suivie par Deleuze ne prétend révoquer la définition réflexive de la philosophie que pour mieux restaurer la supériorité platonico-cartésienne de la pensée métaphysique de l'Être sur la représentation scientifique de la Nature ?

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Qu'en est-il chez Deleuze ? Il est frappant de constater que celui-ci ne prétend jamais que la philosophie soit supérieure à la science, ni dans ses études sur Bergson, ni dans ses autres commentaires, ni dans aucun de ses autres livres. Ne pourrait-on pas suspecter cependant que, si cette supériorité n'est nulle part affirmée, elle semble partout suggérée ? Il y aurait à ce titre une réelle ambiguïté des textes deleuziens, que même *Différence et répétition* ne dissipe pas. Nous devons pourtant prendre au sérieux le silence de Deleuze sur ce point, puisque l'on pourrait tout aussi bien dire que, si l'idée d'une supériorité de la philosophie sur la science semble suggérée par les textes, elle brille surtout par son absence. Il y a à cela une raison précise, qui tient à la compréhension que Deleuze se fait du dualisme en général, et de la thèse bergsonienne en particulier : il n'y a pas chez Deleuze de dualisme substantiel comme chez Descartes, mais un dualisme des moitiés d'une seule substance absolue comme chez Spinoza. *Le dualisme est expressionniste ou il n'est pas*. Qu'est-ce à dire ? Qu'il ne peut pas y avoir de hiérarchie entre la philosophie et la science, car leur dualité renvoie aux deux moitiés de l'absolu, au double mouvement de

2 Cf. Deleuze 1956 : 473-475.

l'expression : le mouvement d'explication dans la matière (Nature) et le mouvement de complication dans l'esprit (Pensée). La science et la philosophie parcourent chacune une moitié de l'absolu dans l'être univoque ; elles pensent la même chose, la même réalité, mais sous deux faces distinctes. Autrement dit, il n'y a pas plus de hiérarchie entre la philosophie et la science qu'entre les deux moitiés de l'absolu. Que Deleuze ait ainsi compris la thèse bergsonnienne nous est confirmé par la formule lapidaire qu'il en propose dans un cours de 1960 sur *L'Évolution créatrice* : « La Science : métaphysique de la Matière. La Métaphysique : science de la Durée. La difficulté, c'est que c'est la même chose qui se détend et se contracte. [...] La Science cède la place à la Métaphysique et vice-versa » (Deleuze 1960 : 178)<sup>3</sup>. Cette ontologie à la fois moniste et dualiste qui règle le rapport entre science et philosophie nous explique pourquoi Deleuze, entre Heidegger et Bergson, ne pouvait choisir le premier. Chez lui, la science et la philosophie diffèrent en nature, mais elles ne peuvent pas plus s'opposer que les deux moitiés de l'absolu. Sous des formes variées, c'est cette idée que Deleuze défend dans ses études sur Bergson, Nietzsche et Spinoza.

*c/ le rapport entre science et philosophie  
dans les études de Deleuze*

Dans les deux études de 1956 sur Bergson, il est de première importance d'observer que le fait que la chose même ne soit pas immédiatement donnée, mais soit comme dissimulée dans la représentation, constitue une pente naturelle de l'être avant d'être un défaut de la représentation. Deleuze décèle en effet chez Bergson une forme d'oubli de l'être fondée dans l'être même. Et peut-être, lorsqu'il distingue deux tendances dans l'être, Bergson va-t-il déjà plus loin que Heidegger. Car la tendance naturelle de la durée à s'actualiser dans la matière justifie l'affinité de la science avec l'intelligence spatialisante à laquelle elle donne une objectivité propre. Pour une part, il n'est donc pas vrai que la science et l'intelligence nous séparerait des choses, puisqu'elles en saisissent un aspect réel, celui par lequel la durée s'extériorise dans la matière. Mais pour une autre part, parce que la réalité actuelle est engendrée à partir du virtuel, il est également vrai que la science nous cache quelque chose d'essentiel. Et les deux aspects se tiennent, comme les deux moitiés de l'être. Telle est l'idée clairement défendue en 1956 : « Nous sommes séparés des choses, la donnée immédiate n'est donc pas immédiatement donnée ;

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3 Deleuze 1960 : 178.

mais nous ne pouvons pas être séparés par un simple accident, par une médiation qui viendrait de nous, qui ne concernerait que nous : il faut que, dans les choses mêmes soit fondé le mouvement qui les dénature, il faut que les choses commencent à se perdre pour que nous finissions par les perdre, il faut qu'un oubli soit fondé dans l'être. La matière est justement dans l'être ce qui prépare et accompagne l'espace, l'intelligence et la science. [...] C'est par là aussi [que Bergson] ne refuse aucun droit à la connaissance scientifique, nous disant qu'elle ne nous sépare pas simplement des choses et de leur vraie nature, mais qu'elle saisit au moins l'une des deux moitiés de l'être, l'un des deux côtés de l'absolu, l'un des deux mouvements de la nature, celui où la nature se détend et se met à l'extérieur de soi » (Deleuze 2002 : 30). Nous voyons mieux ce que la compréhension du rapport de la philosophie à la science doit au dualisme cartésien, mais aussi en quoi la méprise serait complète si l'on oubliait la nature du dualisme prôné par Deleuze : il ne s'agit pas d'un dualisme substantiel qui scinde la réalité en deux régions ontologiques, mais d'un dualisme de puissances qui exprime les deux côtés de l'absolu ou de l'être univoque.

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L'importance de ce dualisme de tendances est attesté, à l'autre bout de la chaîne, dans les commentaires sur Spinoza publiés en 1968 et 1970 : quoiqu'il ne soit pas analysé pour lui-même, le rapport entre philosophie et sciences y repose sur un dualisme de plans ontologiques. Pour Deleuze, l'être ne se scinde pas chez Spinoza en deux substances, mais en deux mouvements expressifs immanents. Cette compréhension expressive du dualisme n'apparaît nulle part mieux que dans les pages sur le parallélisme, où Deleuze distingue un parallélisme dit « ontologique » et un parallélisme dit « épistémologique ». On ne comprendrait pas ces pages, c'est-à-dire la fonction des chapitres VI et VII de *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* et les méandres de leur argumentation (dont les thèses principales seront reprises et résumées dans *Spinoza. Philosophie pratique*), sans voir quelle est l'ambition de Deleuze. Cette ambition nous semble être double : il s'agit d'une part de requalifier l'égalité de l'infini des attributs de la substance (parallélisme ontologique entre l'étendue, la pensée, etc.) en une égalité entre les deux puissances de l'absolu (parallélisme épistémologique entre la puissance d'agir et d'exister et la puissance de penser et de connaître) ; il s'agit d'autre part de montrer comment ce second parallélisme fonde le « singulier privilège » de l'attribut pensée sur les autres, qui est à lui seul égal à toute la puissance de penser et de connaître de Dieu, c'est-à-dire qui est à la puissance de connaître et de penser ce que tous les attributs (y compris la pensée) sont ensemble à la puissance d'agir et d'exister (Deleuze 1968b : 100, 107).

Deleuze montre ainsi que, chez Spinoza, si la puissance formelle d'exister est conditionnée par tous les attributs, la puissance objective de penser est conditionnée par le seul attribut pensée. C'est d'ailleurs en ces pages décisives que Deleuze ose l'unique rapprochement de tout l'ouvrage entre Spinoza et Bergson<sup>4</sup>.

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Depuis les premières études sur Bergson jusqu'à la fin des années 1960, ni l'ontologie expressionniste ni l'orientation générale de Deleuze n'ont varié sur ce thème. Ceci nous est confirmé par les thèses défendues dans *Nietzsche et la philosophie* en 1962, étude parue dans l'intervalle. Aux yeux de Deleuze, l'aspect mythologique de l'éternel retour, le manque de compétence scientifique de Nietzsche et son peu de goût pour la science furent peut-être autant de facteurs qui laissèrent dans l'ombre le véritable sens de sa critique de la science, critique qui porterait sur la « tendance » propre à la pensée scientifique<sup>5</sup>. Pour Nietzsche, là où la philosophie cherche partout les différences de quantité, la science s'efforce partout de les égaliser, de les conduire à l'indifférencié : à l'identité logique, à l'égalité mathématique, à l'équilibre physique. « Il est vrai que Nietzsche a peu de compétence et peu de goût pour la science. Mais ce qui le sépare de la science est une tendance, une manière de penser. À tort ou à raison,

4 Cf. Deleuze 1968b : 103–104 : « Le Dieu de Spinoza est un Dieu qui est et qui produit tout, comme l'Un-Tout des platoniciens ; mais aussi un Dieu qui se pense et qui pense tout, comme le Premier moteur d'Aristote. D'une part, nous devons attribuer à Dieu une puissance d'exister et d'agir identique à son essence formelle ou correspondant à sa nature. Mais d'autre part nous devons également lui attribuer une puissance de penser, identique à son essence objective ou correspondant à son idée. Or ce principe d'égalité des puissances mérite un examen minutieux, parce que nous risquons de le confondre avec un autre principe d'égalité, qui concerne seulement les attributs. Pourtant, *la distinction des puissances et des attributs a une importance essentielle dans le spinozisme*. Dieu, c'est-à-dire l'absolument infini, possède deux puissances égales : puissance d'exister et d'agir, puissance de penser et de connaître. Si l'on peut se servir d'une formule bergsonienne, l'absolu a deux « côtés », deux moitiés. Si l'absolu possède ainsi deux puissances, c'est en soi et par soi, les enveloppant dans son unité radicale. Il n'en est pas de même des attributs : l'absolu possède une infinité d'attributs. Nous n'en connaissons que deux, l'étendue et la pensée, mais parce que notre connaissance est limitée, parce que nous sommes constitués par un mode d'étendue et un mode de la pensée. La détermination des deux puissances, au contraire, n'est nullement relative aux limites de notre connaissance, pas plus qu'elle ne dépend de l'état de notre constitution. [...] Les deux puissances n'ont donc rien de relatif : ce sont les moitiés de l'absolu, les dimensions de l'absolu, les puissances de l'absolu ». – Ces thèses sont résumées dans Deleuze 1970 : 92–98.

5 Ce jugement somme toute brutal sur l'incompétence et le manque de goût scientifique de Nietzsche, peut-être plus inspiré par l'image de Nietzsche que par la réalité des faits, est tempéré dans la courte biographie que Deleuze lui consacre en 1965. Il y rappelle en effet que, dans les années 1870, « Nietzsche s'intéresse de plus en plus aux sciences positives, à la physique, à la biologie, à la médecine » et que c'est en partie « le goût des sciences naturelles » qui le rapproche de Paul Rée (Deleuze : 1965 : 7–8). – Sur ce point, on consultera entre autres Abel 1984, Müller-Lauter 1998, Stiegler 2001.

Nietzsche croit que la science, dans son maniement de la quantité, tend toujours à égaliser les quantités, à compenser les inégalités. Nietzsche, critique de la science, n'invoque jamais les droits de la qualité contre la quantité ; il invoque les droits de la différence de quantité contre l'égalité, les droits de l'inégalité contre l'égalisation des quantités. [...] C'est pourquoi toute sa critique se joue sur trois plans : contre l'identité logique, contre l'égalité mathématique, contre l'équilibre physique. *Contre les trois formes de l'indifférencié* » (Deleuze 1962 : 51). La discrète réserve que Deleuze formule à l'égard de la critique nietzschéenne (« à tort ou à raison, Nietzsche croit... ») s'explique aisément : c'est qu'il est partiellement faux de dire que les sciences annulent la différence de quantité, puisqu'elles en vivent au contraire : en témoignent les ressources que furent les paradoxes logiques, l'origine ordinale du nombre en mathématique, la différence de potentiel en physique ; il est vrai, en revanche, que leur point de vue ne leur permet pas de saisir cette différence *en tant que telle*, mais seulement d'accompagner son mouvement d'annulation : dans la grammaire logique de l'identité, dans l'extension cardinale du nombre ordinal, dans l'annulation entropique des différences intensives (seconde loi de la thermodynamique). Au total, si Nietzsche avait donc raison de considérer qu'il y a un nihilisme de la science, c'est qu'elle tend par nature à aborder la réalité du petit côté, depuis les états de choses actuels où surgit l'illusion de l'identique et du négatif (Deleuze 1968a : 299 sq.).

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C'est une orientation philosophique semblable qui prévaut encore dans le chapitre IV du *Bergsonisme*, en 1966, quoique sous une autre forme : Deleuze n'y invoque plus *L'Évolution créatrice* mais *Durée et simultanéité*. On risquerait de mal comprendre l'importance que Deleuze prête à l'un des ouvrages les plus négligés de Bergson si l'on méconnaissait l'enjeu qu'il y perçoit. Deleuze estime que Bergson y exhibe la différence entre la philosophie et la science autour du problème du temps : ainsi lorsque Bergson montre que, même sous la forme inédite que lui donne Einstein dans la théorie de la relativité, la science ne peut éviter de spatialiser le temps, là où la philosophie le pense en termes de durée pure. Et plus particulièrement, Deleuze estime que cette différence de conception s'établit autour du concept de multiplicité, que Bergson et Einstein empruntent à Riemann, mais dont l'un fait un usage philosophique et l'autre un usage scientifique. Cette convergence paradoxale, c'est-à-dire aussi bien cette divergence autour d'une même notion, est peut-être l'enseignement majeur que Deleuze tire de Bergson dans les années 1960, et qui débouchera sur la théorie des multiplicités de *Différence et répétition*. On comprend que Deleuze balaye d'un revers de main l'idée que Bergson

aurait finalement renoncé à rééditer son ouvrage pour cause de repentirs théoriques ; pour lui, Bergson n'a jamais renié la divergence essentielle de la philosophie et de la science sur le temps, il a seulement renoncé à la défendre publiquement. Selon Deleuze, ce que Bergson affirme dans *Durée et simultanéité* c'est que la pluralité des temps manipulée par la théorie de la relativité restreinte, loin de nier l'unité du temps réel, la présuppose au contraire. Cette unité n'est cependant plus celle d'un temps absolu et homogène, à la manière de l'immense présent divin du rationalisme classique, ultime avatar du temps spatialisé de la science. Ce n'est donc pas une simultanéité élevée à l'infini par la philosophie qui correspond à la simultanéité de l'instant *t* mesurée par la science classique. Si la conception bergsonienne du temps est une conception métaphysique qui correspond à la découverte d'une nouvelle physique par Einstein, c'est qu'elle désigne l'unité de coexistence d'une pluralité de durées irréductibles, le temps un qui rassemble toutes les multiplicités dans leur hétérogénéité même. Or, pour Deleuze, cette multiplicité paradoxale, cette unité ou cette univocité ontologique de l'hétérogène comme tel, Bergson montre que seule la philosophie peut le penser. Car quoique la relativité eût introduit une nouvelle façon de spatialiser le temps dans un mixte impur, puisque le temps n'est plus une variable indépendante au sein des blocs d'espace-temps, il était nécessaire que la science, en vertu de sa tendance propre, ne sache expliciter ce présupposé. C'est cette impuissance, pourtant, qui la conduit à confondre une multiplicité virtuelle, où les multiplicités hétérogènes coexistent comme telles, avec une multiplicité actuelle, où une telle coexistence est impossible<sup>6</sup>.

d/ y a-t-il un privilège de la philosophie sur la science ?

Au total, Deleuze établit dans ses commentaires un dualisme ontologique de tendances qui exprime les différentes figures de l'être, les différents niveaux de la différence (l'être, l'Idée, le phénomène ; l'ontologique, le transcendantal, l'empirique ; la différence interne, les différences de nature, les

6 Cf. Deleuze 1966 : 86–88 : « Ce que Bergson reproche à Einstein d'un bout à l'autre de *Durée et simultanéité*, c'est d'avoir confondu le virtuel et l'actuel (l'introduction du facteur symbolique, c'est-à-dire d'une fiction, exprime cette confusion). C'est donc d'avoir confondu les deux types de multiplicité, virtuelle et actuelle. [...] Ce qu'il dénonce depuis le début, c'est toute *combinaison* d'espace et de temps dans un mixte mal analysé, où l'espace est considéré comme tout fait, et le temps, dès lors comme une quatrième dimension de l'espace. Et sans doute, cette spatialisation du temps est inséparable de la science. Mais le propre de la relativité est d'avoir poussé cette spatialisation, d'avoir soudé le mixte d'une manière tout à fait nouvelle. [...] Bref, la Relativité a formé un mélange particulièrement lié, mais qui tombe sous la critique bergsonienne du "mixte" en général ». – Pour un aperçu général des analyses bergsoniennes, cf. During 2009.

différences empiriques ; la forme du temps, le virtuel, l'actuel ; la question, le problème, la solution). Disons d'un mot : c'est au niveau « intermédiaire » des Idées que se joue le partage entre les deux tendances. Tandis que la science rapporte l'Idée à ses actualisations empiriques (complexe problème-solution), parcourant en deux sens le mouvement d'explication de la différence (Nature), l'art et la philosophie rapporte l'Idée à son origine ontologique, suivant le mouvement de complication de l'être vers la différence interne (complexe question-problème) (Pensée). C'est donc la dialectique des Idées-problèmes qui forme l'instance où communiquent et se disjoignent la science et la philosophie. Il y a en effet une différence d'orientation dans l'être univoque : la science va de l'Idée au phénomène qui l'actualise (et retour), là où la philosophie va de l'Idée à l'être dont elle sort. Il nous faut donc mener maintenant l'examen de la dialectique des Idées, qui peut être prolongée soit vers la réalité empirique qui l'incarne soit vers la racine ontologique dont elle dérive.

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On demandera, au préalable, ce qu'il en est à ce stade d'une éventuelle hiérarchie entre science et philosophie. Car il semblerait que nous ne puissions nous défaire d'une certaine gêne face à l'ambiguïté des textes que nous avons cités. Tout se passe en effet comme si l'on pouvait en proposer deux lectures incompatibles, mais également valides : l'une qui verrait Deleuze rejeter toute supériorité de la philosophie sur la science, conformément à la lettre des textes ; l'autre qui le verrait introduire une nouvelle forme de hiérarchie, conformément à leur esprit. Il nous faut considérer les silences de Deleuze avec précaution : car il n'est pas moins possible d'y voir l'indice d'une théorie encore incomplète que le symptôme d'une supériorité inavouée. La meilleure manière de dissiper l'ambiguïté des textes, nous semble-t-il, consiste à souligner que le problème n'est pas pour Deleuze celui de la supériorité ou de l'égalité de la philosophie sur la science, mais d'abord et surtout la distinction de leurs domaines respectifs. C'est pourquoi les reproches adressés à la science trouvent toujours leur réciproque dans le champ philosophique : ainsi, il est vrai que la science émet une prétention illégitime lorsqu'elle prétend régner sur l'ensemble de la réalité, du fait qu'elle méconnaît la différence entre les deux moitiés de l'absolu et réduit le virtuel à l'actuel ; mais il n'est pas moins vrai, réciproquement, que la philosophie est dénaturée lorsqu'elle est soumise aux exigences de la connaissance scientifique et de la représentation, comme le fait la logique lorsqu'elle introduit en philosophie des exigences d'un autre ordre (Deleuze 1968a : 198-213 ; Deleuze 1969 ; Deleuze et Guattari 1991). En tout ceci, la philosophie ne jouit d'aucun privilège sur la science, mais chacune possède une spécificité qu'il s'agit de concevoir et de pratiquer adéquatement.

## 2/ La dialectique des problèmes

### a/ l'attachement au concept de dialectique

L'attachement de Deleuze au concept de dialectique s'explique par le concours de trois courants de pensée : un courant rationaliste, qui relie Platon à Hegel et fait de la dialectique le régime de pensée approprié au domaine des Idées ; un courant empiriste, qui est issu des travaux de Jean Wahl et suggère la possibilité d'une dialectique non hégélienne ; un courant épistémologique, qui anime une partie de la philosophie française du XXe siècle, laquelle fait un usage extensif du concept de dialectique à l'intersection de la philosophie et des sciences.

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Malgré leurs profondes divergences doctrinales, Platon, Kant et Hegel eurent en commun de voir dans la dialectique la manière dont la pensée parcourt le domaine des Idées. Si l'Idée est l'objet de la pensée philosophique, la dialectique est son régime. Sur ce point, Deleuze ne fait pas exception. Il est vrai que, si l'on considère les ouvrages postérieurs à *Logique du sens*, le terme de dialectique sera tout simplement banni du vocabulaire. Guattari confirmera plus tard que Deleuze répugnera à l'employer dans les années 1970<sup>7</sup>. Ce n'est pourtant pas encore le cas dans les années 1960. Objectera-t-on que, dans *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, Deleuze ne fait référence à la dialectique que de manière polémique ? Il est vrai en effet que tout l'ouvrage montre l'incompatibilité profonde de la pensée différentielle et affirmative de Nietzsche avec les différents avatars d'une dialectique du négatif, notamment la dialectique hégélienne (Deleuze 1962 : 183-189). Toutefois, Nietzsche ne prétendait nullement réformer la théorie des Idées. Deleuze, si. Il n'est donc guère étonnant d'entendre un autre son de cloche dans *Différence et répétition*. Deleuze entend y réhabiliter la dialectique. Polémique et réhabilitation, ces deux aspects ne sont pourtant pas incompatibles. Il existe même une profonde continuité entre *Nietzsche et la philosophie* et *Différence et répétition*. Car que signifie réhabiliter la dialectique sinon l'arracher à la puissance du négatif ? De la critique nietzschéenne, Deleuze conserve l'idée que l'histoire de la dialectique est liée au négatif. Mais loin d'en conclure qu'il faut en rejeter le concept, il en déduit qu'il faut le réformer. Lorsqu'il affirme que l'histoire de la dialectique a été celle d'une « longue dénaturation » qui l'a fait tomber sous la puissance du négatif, nous devons donc comprendre : il y a eu dénaturation de la dialectique parce que la nature de la dialectique n'est pas intrinsèquement liée au négatif, et c'est cette

7 Cf. Guattari 2007 : 222-223.



vraie nature qu'il s'agit de révéler (Deleuze 1968a : 204). La théorie des Idées élaborée au quatrième chapitre de *Différence et répétition* se fera alors fort de redonner à la dialectique le caractère affirmatif et différentiel de la pensée pure.

Qu'il soit possible de concevoir une dialectique qui ne soit pas une dialectique de la contradiction dans l'identique mais une dialectique de la différence, telle était déjà l'hypothèse de Jean Wahl. Dans *Vers le concret*, en 1932, celui-ci proposait en effet de substituer à la dialectique abstraite de Hegel, où les opposés se trouvent finalement réconciliés dans l'identité de l'absolu, une dialectique concrète et empiriste qui, au lieu de surmonter la différence de l'être et de la pensée, maintient la valeur positive du paradoxe et du problème. Quoique Wahl proposât d'en tirer une nouvelle conception de la négation, il ne fait nul doute que Deleuze y vit plutôt la possibilité d'une dialectique de la différence<sup>8</sup>. C'est d'ailleurs sous le titre « Dialectique et différence » qu'est résumé, dans la bibliographie de *Différence et répétition*, le sens que l'œuvre de Wahl eut pour lui (Deleuze 1968a : 402). Comme le suggère Vincent Descombes dans *Le Même et l'Autre*, l'évolution du rapport à la dialectique joua un grand rôle dans les transformations de la philosophie française à partir des années 1930. Mais l'intelligibilité de l'empirisme transcendantal deleuzien nous semble compromise lorsque Descombes fait commencer cette histoire en 1933, avec les séminaires de Kojève sur Hegel ; il faut même s'étonner que, lorsqu'il évoque la « recherche d'une philosophie concrète », les travaux de Jean Wahl ne soient nulle part mentionnés, eux dont l'influence fut pourtant décisive sur l'empirisme deleuzien<sup>9</sup>. L'anti-hégélianisme n'ayant pas attendu les années 1960 pour se frayer une voie en France, dans l'histoire du statut de la dialectique 1932 ne nous paraît donc pas une date moins importante que 1933.

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L'épistémologie française du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle forme le troisième courant philosophique dont l'influence sur la philosophie française en général et sur la notion de dialectique en particulier ne peut être ici sous-estimée. Car de Brunschvicg à Bachelard, en passant par Lautman, Cavailles, Bouligand ou Gonthier, les épistémologues français firent du concept de dialectique

8 Cf. Wahl 1932 : 23–25. Le refus de rompre avec le négatif est clairement attesté par les réserves que Jean Wahl émet à la fin de son compte-rendu élogieux de *Nietzsche et la philosophie* pour la *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* : « Nous sommes devant deux dangers, dans une telle interprétation si intéressante et profonde qu'elle soit, ou, en tout cas, devant deux difficultés ; la difficulté qui consiste à faire disparaître complètement le négatif et une autre difficulté qui viendrait de ce que le positif risque de ne plus apparaître autant qu'il le faudrait » (Wahl 1963 : 353).

9 Cf. Descombes 1979 : 21–33.

un usage aussi polysémique que prolifique, au point même qu'il pouvait paraître difficile d'en déterminer le sens. Le choix que fait Deleuze de maintenir le concept de dialectique peut alors s'expliquer par une intention stratégique : celle de préciser et de stabiliser l'usage du concept. Cette hypothèse est d'autant plus plausible que la thèse principale de Deleuze, finalement intitulée *Différence et répétition*, était initialement centrée sur le concept de problème, dont la nature est d'être dialectique et dont on sait qu'il se situe pour lui à l'interface de la philosophie et de la science. La réflexion de Deleuze sur la dialectique des problèmes ne pouvait donc pas être étrangère au débat épistémologique<sup>10</sup>. Sous cet aspect, Deleuze ancre sa théorie de la dialectique sur les thèses d'Albert Lautman, lequel occupe une place à part tant dans l'épistémologie française que dans la théorie deleuzienne. D'après Deleuze, il revient en effet à Lautman d'avoir établi la distinction la plus rigoureuse entre le domaine des problèmes dialectiques et le domaine des solutions mathématiques.

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*b/ « les problèmes sont toujours dialectiques »*

L'essentiel de la thèse que Deleuze emprunte à Lautman peut se résumer ainsi : les problèmes relèvent de la dialectique métamathématique de l'Idée, les solutions théoriques relèvent de la science mathématique. Cette idée se décline en trois points, qui correspondent aux trois aspects du problème : « sa différence de nature avec les solutions ; sa transcendance par rapport aux solutions qu'il engendre à partir de ses propres conditions déterminantes ; son immanence aux solutions qui viennent le recouvrir » (Deleuze 1968a : 231–232). Pour Deleuze, il est manifeste que la différence de nature entre l'instance-problème et l'instance-solution renvoie à la différence réelle du virtuel et de l'actuel, du transcendantal et de l'empirique (Deleuze 1969 : 69). Mais comment la différence de nature concilie-t-elle à la fois l'immanence et la transcendance du problème par rapport aux solutions ? D'une part, si le problème doit être dit transcendant, c'est qu'il constitue un système de liaisons virtuelles (rapports différentiels entre éléments idéels) qui possède une consistance objective et une autonomie subjective propres. D'autre part, s'il doit être dit immanent, c'est que ces liaisons virtuelles s'incarnent nécessairement dans des solutions actuelles qui ne leur ressemblent pas (relations réelles entre éléments actuels). Ainsi, Lautman affirme qu'il n'y a pas de séparation

<sup>10</sup> Sur ce point, voir Bouligand et Desgranges 1949 : Deuxième partie, chap. III. Deleuze mentionne cet ouvrage dans lequel on trouve, entre autres, un portrait de la « tendance dialectique » dans l'épistémologie française, ainsi qu'une courte présentation d'Albert Lautman.

ontologique entre le domaine des Idées et celui des théories mathématiques, contrairement à ce que prétend le « platonisme vulgaire ». À son tour, Deleuze déclare que le problème n'est jamais épuisé par les solutions qui viennent le recouvrir, quoiqu'il n'existe pas indépendamment d'elles, puisqu'il y a une genèse nécessaire de l'Idée dialectique aux théories mathématiques.

Il semble que nous retrouvions ici, sous une forme développée, la conception de la pensée pure que Deleuze défendait dès les années 1950, à savoir qu'elle porte l'épreuve du vrai et du faux dans les problèmes, qu'elle en détermine le sens, puis en tire les conséquences théoriques. La dialectique des problèmes fonderait ainsi l'idée, défendue dans *Empirisme et subjectivité*, que la véritable critique ne porte pas en philosophie sur les solutions mais sur le sens des problèmes, sur la rigueur avec laquelle ils sont posés. On objectera que, dans *Différence et répétition*, cette opération de détermination des problèmes concerne aussi bien la science que la philosophie. Ainsi lorsque Deleuze affirme : « Les philosophes et les savants rêvent de porter l'épreuve du vrai et du faux dans les problèmes ; tel est l'objet de la dialectique comme calcul supérieur ou combinatoire » (Deleuze 1968a : 207). Mais si cette opération concerne la science et la philosophie au même titre, leur différence ne se trouve-t-elle pas abolie à l'endroit même où elle devait apparaître, c'est-à-dire au niveau de la dialectique des Idées-problèmes ? Car si l'une et l'autre s'occupent de la détermination dialectique des problèmes et de la genèse des solutions correspondantes, quelle différence les sépare encore ? Pour y répondre, il faut se garder de schématiser la thèse que Deleuze emprunte à Lautman, comme si la philosophie se contentait de poser des problèmes que la science venait ensuite résoudre. En effet, Deleuze ne croit pas davantage à l'idée que la philosophie pose des problèmes qu'elle ne résout pas qu'à l'idée que la science résout des problèmes qu'elle ne pose pas. La philosophie est, comme la science, une théorie ; inversement, la science opère, comme la philosophie, une détermination des problèmes. Par conséquent, contrairement à ce que pouvait laisser penser la distinction lautmanienne entre problèmes dialectiques et solutions théoriques, non seulement toutes les sciences possèdent pour Deleuze leurs problèmes spécifiques, mais elles sont en outre capables de les déterminer par elles-mêmes, c'est-à-dire de pénétrer dans la dialectique extra-mathématique qui gouverne les solutions théoriques qui en découlent. Pourtant, comment Deleuze peut-il concilier l'idée que la dialectique des problèmes constitue la forme commune de toutes les pensées avec l'idée que chaque science possède ses problèmes spécifiques ?

### *c/ problèmes dialectiques et champs symboliques*

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Pour ce faire, il était nécessaire que Deleuze dépasse la dualité lautmanienne du problème dialectique et de la solution mathématique. Entre les deux, Deleuze introduit ainsi une troisième instance, qu'il nomme « l'expression scientifique des problèmes ». Il ne distingue pas par là deux niveaux ou deux sens du problème, l'un dialectique et l'autre scientifique : en effet, le problème est toujours dialectique, et il n'est que cela ; et réciproquement, l'Idée n'est pas en tant que telle objet de science, et elle ne l'est jamais. En revanche, cela signifie : d'une part, qu'il y a différents ordres dialectiques d'Idées-problèmes correspondant à chaque science ; d'autre part, que chaque ordre est voué à s'exprimer dans un champ symbolique spécifique constituant le domaine de « résolubilité » du problème ; et enfin, que ce champ d'expression symbolique s'incarne dans des solutions qui découlent de la position du problème et qui définissent le domaine de la théorie proprement dite. Voici le passage de *Différence et répétition* où Deleuze introduit cette troisième instance entre la sphère des problèmes dialectiques et celle des solutions théoriques : « Les problèmes sont toujours dialectiques, la dialectique n'a pas d'autre sens, les problèmes aussi n'ont pas d'autre sens. Ce qui est mathématique (ou physique, ou biologique, ou psychique, ou sociologique...) ce sont les solutions. Mais il est vrai d'une part, que la nature des solutions renvoie à des ordres différents de problèmes dans la dialectique elle-même ; et d'autre part que les problèmes, en vertu de leur immanence non moins essentielle que la transcendance, s'expriment eux-mêmes techniquement dans ce domaine de solutions qu'ils engendrent en fonction de leur ordre dialectique. [...] C'est pourquoi l'on doit dire qu'il y a des problèmes mathématiques, physiques, biologiques, psychiques, sociologiques, quoique tout problème soit dialectique par nature et qu'il n'y ait pas d'autre problème que dialectique. La mathématique ne comprend donc pas seulement des solutions de problèmes ; elle comprend aussi l'expression des problèmes relative au champ de résolubilité qu'ils définissent, et qu'ils définissent par leur ordre dialectique même » (Deleuze 1968a : 232). Dès lors, une fois que l'on insère l'expression scientifique du problème entre le problème virtuel et sa solution actuelle, le rapport complet s'énonce de la manière suivante : « Problème ou Idée dialectique – Expression scientifique d'un problème – Instauration du champ de solution » (Deleuze 1968a : 235).

Mais comment se définissent la détermination des problèmes et leur expression scientifique ? Pour Deleuze, la détermination des problèmes se confond avec la détermination complète de l'Idée dans son « universalité

vraie » et sa « singularité concrète ». L'universalité de l'Idée renvoie aux rapports différentiels qui la rendent réellement déterminable ; sa singularité, à la répartition correspondantes de points remarquables qui la constituent comme complètement déterminée – tels sont les deux principaux aspects de l'Idée, les deux figures principales de la raison suffisante (principe de détermination réciproque et de détermination complète). Or, l'expression scientifique d'un problème se joue précisément dans le passage de l'un à l'autre, puisque les singularités concrètes sont purement idéales et pourtant déjà engagées dans un mouvement immanent d'expression symbolique. Et chez Deleuze, rien n'indique que cette expression symbolique soit réservée à la science. Ce qui est réservé à la science, c'est bien plutôt le domaine des solutions actuelles. Cette idée apparaît clairement dans le passage suivant : « S'il est vrai que ce qui est dialectique en principe, ce sont les problèmes, et scientifique, leurs solutions, nous devons distinguer de manière plus complète : le problème comme instance transcendante ; le champ symbolique où s'expriment les conditions du problème dans son mouvement d'immanence ; le champ de résolubilité scientifique où s'incarne le problème et en fonction duquel se définit le symbolisme précédent » (Deleuze 1968a : 213). Mais alors, toute la question devient de savoir : quelle est la nature de ces champs symboliques qui expriment immédiatement les conditions dialectiques du problème, et qui restent cependant spécifiques à chaque ordre d'Idée et à chaque domaine de pensée ? Retenons du moins, pour le moment, que ce sont les signes qui expriment les conditions du problème dans un champ symbolique. « Les problèmes et leurs symboliques sont en rapport avec des signes. Ce sont les signes qui “font problème”, et qui se développent dans un champ symbolique » (Deleuze 1968a : 213). La question de la nature du champ symbolique se répercute donc sur celle des signes, en tant qu'ils expriment l'Idée ou le problème.

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### **3/ L'expression des problèmes dans des signes**

a/ la dialectique est métamathématique,  
sans être philosophique

Le rapport de la philosophie à la science n'a pas encore reçu de solution. Nous avons vu qu'il se noue autour de la dialectique des Idées. Mais la philosophie ne se confond pas plus avec la dialectique que la dialectique n'est étrangère à la science. Il serait certes tentant de considérer que, dans une tradition platonicienne, Deleuze identifie la pensée philosophique à la dialectique métamathématique des Idées. L'influence de Platon sur

Lautman militerait d'ailleurs en ce sens<sup>11</sup>. Cependant, même si Deleuze reprend les thèses lautmaniennes à son compte, il faudrait faire violence au texte de *Différence et répétition* pour en extraire une telle idée. Nulle part on n'y trouvera que la pensée philosophique se confond avec la dialectique. Deleuze ne le dit jamais, même et surtout quand l'occasion se présente. Ainsi, dans le passage suivant : « Nul mieux qu'Albert Lautman, dans son œuvre admirable, n'a montré que les problèmes étaient d'abord des Idées platoniciennes, des liaisons idéelles entre notions dialectiques, relatives à des "situations éventuelles de l'existant" ; mais aussi bien qu'ils s'actualisent dans les relations réelles constitutives de la solution cherchée sur un champ mathématique, ou physique, etc. C'est en ce sens, selon Lautman, que la science participe toujours d'une dialectique qui la dépasse, c'est-à-dire d'une puissance métamathématique et extra-propositionnelle, bien que cette dialectique n'incarne ses liaisons que dans les propositions de théories scientifiques effectives » (Deleuze 1968a : 212-213). L'inspiration fortement platonicienne de ce passage suggérerait que la philosophie soit identifiée à la dialectique ; or, on ne peut que constater qu'elle manque ici à sa place, dans un contexte pourtant propice à son apparition. Cette remarque vaut pour d'autres passages de *Différence et répétition* où, chaque fois, la philosophie brille par son absence.

Deleuze ne prétend donc pas que la dialectique des Idées-problèmes se confond avec la philosophie, mais il n'affirme pas non plus qu'elle demeure tout à fait étrangère à la science. Car lorsque le mathématicien détermine les conditions d'un problème, ne faut-il pas dire qu'il exerce pour son compte l'art dialectique, quand bien même celui-ci serait « extra-mathématique » (Deleuze 1968a : 205) ? Certes, il ne serait pas moins tentant de considérer que les problèmes dialectiques échappent à la science. Mais encore une fois, la lettre du texte dément une telle interprétation, puisque Deleuze affirme que la science entretient un rapport interne et direct aux problèmes. Quoique la tendance majoritaire de la science mathématique la porte à concevoir les problèmes en fonction des théorèmes qui en découlent, il existe une autre tendance qui la porte à les déterminer par elle-même. C'est sous ce rapport que, dans *Mille plateaux*, Deleuze et Guattari opposeront deux modèles de la science, un modèle problématique et un modèle théorématique (Deleuze et Guattari 1980 : 446-464). Mais alors, si la science témoigne en elle-même la capacité de remonter aux problèmes, au point qu'elle outre-passe les limites que la représentation lui assigne, ne faut-il pas dire

11 Sur cette influence, cf. Barot 2009 : chap. IV.

qu'elle participe de plein droit à la dialectique des Idées ? En disant cela, la distinction entre science et philosophie ne se trouve-t-elle pas entièrement brouillée ? Quel peut bien être en effet leur rapport respectif à la dialectique ?

*b/ les rapports de la science  
et de la philosophie à la dialectique*

Sur ce point, les textes de *Différence et répétition* ne sont guère explicites. Nous croyons que ce silence relatif s'explique surtout par la prudence de Deleuze, qui n'entend pas encore se prononcer sur la nature de la philosophie et de la science. Si nous nous en tenons à la lettre du texte sans chercher à toute force des réponses qui n'y sont pas, si nous nous refusons à interpréter le texte de *Différence et répétition* à la lumière des ouvrages ultérieurs, il faut certes concéder que la théorie deleuzienne se présente de manière incomplète, puisque le statut de la philosophie et de la science n'est pas complètement déterminé, mais il faut néanmoins affirmer qu'elle est déjà rigoureuse et univoque. En effet, Deleuze y dessine en creux l'image de la science et de la philosophie ; il ouvre une piste sur laquelle il ne s'engage pas encore ; il énonce des exigences, sans les accomplir tout à fait. Ces exigences nous semblent devoir être comprises et résumées de la manière suivante.

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1°) *La dialectique des Idées-problèmes concerne l'universalité de la pensée pure.* Ce premier aspect définit la transcendance de l'Idée et l'universalité des problèmes dialectiques, par rapport auxquels la science, l'art ou la philosophie n'ont aucun privilège. Cette thèse nous permet de comprendre pourquoi Deleuze n'identifie jamais la philosophie à la dialectique, et pourquoi toute science y participe aussi bien, quoique la dialectique soit métamathématique. Deleuze ne démentira jamais cette thèse, puisqu'il considérera toujours que c'est au niveau des problèmes que les différentes formes de pensée communiquent. 2°) *Il y a des ordres dialectiques d'Idée correspondant à chaque domaine.* Ce deuxième aspect définit l'existence de niveaux dialectiques au sein de l'Idée. Or, dans l'échelle des Idées dialectiques, la mathématique occupe le « dernier ordre », c'est-à-dire le plus haut (Deleuze 1968a : 235). Cela ne signifie pas que les Idées concernent exclusivement la science, puisqu'il y a bien des Idées philosophiques et artistiques (quoique Deleuze ne précise pas si elles ont un ordre propre, et lequel). Cette thèse ne sera pas non plus démentie, puisque Deleuze affirmera en 1987 : « On n'a pas une idée en général. Une idée – tout comme celui qui a l'idée – elle est déjà vouée à tel ou tel

domaine. C'est tantôt une idée en peinture, tantôt une idée en roman, tantôt une idée en philosophie, tantôt une idée en science » (Deleuze 2003 : 291). 3°) *L'expression symbolique est associée à des champs symboliques*. Ce troisième aspect définit le mouvement d'immanence de l'Idée, sa vocation à s'exprimer dans des champs symboliques distincts. L'Idée n'existe pas hors du champ symbolique qui l'exprime, idée qui ne sera pas non plus démentie par la suite : « Les idées, il faut les traiter comme des potentiels déjà engagés dans tel ou tel mode d'expression et inséparable du mode d'expression, si bien que je ne peux pas dire que j'ai une idée en général » (Deleuze 2003 : 291). 4°) *Les champs symboliques sont caractérisés par des signes spécifiques*. Ce quatrième aspect définit la phénoménalisation de l'Idée dans des signes. Lorsque Deleuze écrit que « ce sont les signes qui "font problème", et qui se développent dans un champ symbolique » (Deleuze 1968a : 213), nous pouvons remarquer deux choses : d'une part, que le champ symbolique n'est pas défini comme un champ d'expression scientifique des problèmes, de sorte que nous pouvons considérer qu'il existe un champ symbolique spécifique à tout type d'Idée, y compris aux Idées philosophiques (reste à savoir quelle est leur nature) ; d'autre part, que les champs symboliques sont associés à des signes, si bien que rien n'interdit de penser que la philosophie, qui n'est pas la dialectique toute entière, possède ses signes spécifiques (ce qui ne préjuge pas non plus de leur nature). Deleuze le dira clairement à la fin des années 1980 : « ce qu'on pourrait appeler Idées, ce sont ces instances qui s'effectuent tantôt dans des images, tantôt dans des fonctions, tantôt dans des concepts. Ce qui effectue l'Idée, c'est le signe » (Deleuze 1990 : 92). Mais en 1968, ceci n'est encore qu'un programme : entre-temps, la détermination complète de la philosophie, dans son rapport intérieur à l'art et à la science, devra impliquer une théorie des signes philosophiques, artistiques et scientifiques. Il reviendra aux deux tomes sur le cinéma puis à *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?* de préciser ces aspects encore partiellement indéterminés à la fin des années 1960, à savoir la nature des signes et leur rapport à l'Idée.

Où passe alors la différence entre la science et la philosophie ? En quoi leur rapport se noue-t-il et se dénoue-t-il autour de la dialectique ? Il faut dire : *la science incarne les problèmes dialectiques dans des théories qui correspondent au mouvement d'actualisation de l'Idée dans des champs empiriques (complexe problème-solution), tandis que la philosophie exprime les problèmes dans des concepts qui prolongent le mouvement de contraction jusqu'à la complication dans l'être (complexe question-problème)*. Dans le cas de la science, Deleuze dit clairement que les expressions



scientifiques du problème s'incarnent à leur tour dans des « solutions réelles », c'est-à-dire en l'occurrence actuelles, qui diffèrent en nature des problèmes. C'est pourquoi les théories scientifiques se déploient d'après Deleuze dans un mixte de pensée et d'imagination. Rien n'indique en revanche que la philosophie s'incarne elle aussi dans des théories actuelles ; ou plutôt, tout indique le contraire, à commencer par l'identité de nature entre l'Idée de différence et son concept philosophique (Deleuze 1968a : 405). Il en va d'ailleurs de même de l'art chez Deleuze, comme le montre *Proust et les signes* : les signes esthétiques sont strictement adéquats à la forme pure du temps, ils sont immatériels en tant qu'ils ont abjuré tout contenu empirique<sup>12</sup>.

Dans tous les cas, c'est toujours la notion de signe qui est au cœur du rapport entre science et philosophie, dans la mesure où le signe a un double aspect qui correspond au double mouvement de l'expression. Le signe est l'expression phénoménale de l'Idée, mais il est lui-même à cheval sur les deux côtés de l'absolu, ayant une moitié actuelle qui effectue la puissance d'exister en tant qu'il s'étend dans la matière, et une moitié virtuelle qui participe de la puissance de penser en tant qu'il intériorise sa genèse différentielle. « Le signe est bien un effet, mais l'effet a deux aspects, l'un par lequel, en tant que signe, il exprime la dissymétrie productrice, l'autre par lequel il tend à l'annuler ». Et Deleuze d'ajouter : « Le signe n'est pas tout à fait de l'ordre du symbole ; pourtant, il le prépare en impliquant une différence interne (mais en laissant à l'extérieur les conditions de sa reproduction) » (Deleuze 1968a : 31). Que signifie cet ajout ? Pourquoi le signe n'est-il pas identique au symbole, alors même qu'il le « prépare » ? C'est que, dans les années 1960, le symbole désigne chez Deleuze un signe qui a intériorisé les conditions de sa reproduction. Il revient donc au même de dire que, dans tous les cas, c'est la capacité du signe à devenir symbole et ainsi à présenter directement la forme transcendantale du temps qui est en jeu. La différence entre la philosophie, la science et l'art se fait donc chez Deleuze au niveau de la théorie des signes, de la capacité de leurs signes respectifs à présenter le temps à l'état pur.

De ce point de vue, comme le montrait Alquié à propos de Descartes, il y a bien chez Deleuze un dépassement de la science dans la métaphysique, puisque la tâche de la philosophie est d'exprimer la présence de l'être qui déborde la représentation scientifique de la nature. C'est en ce

12 Cette thèse sera reprise et développée dans *L'image-temps* (Deleuze 1985) à propos des signes directs du temps.

sens que Deleuze pouvait dire des commentaires d'Alquié qu'ils montrent « une conception de la philosophie qu'il faut conserver, une pensée qui exprime l'essence même de la métaphysique ». Cependant, à la différence du cartésianisme, l'être n'est pas chez Deleuze un fondement métaphysique ; et à la différence du platonisme, il n'est pas réglé sur la figure du Même. Il est au contraire le sans-fond qui mine tout fondement, l'effondrement universel ou la Différence. Cette impossible coïncidence des deux moitiés de l'absolu trouve son concept dans le concept de différence interne, et dans sa double tendance : tendance à s'extérioriser dans la Nature et tendance à s'intérioriser dans la Pensée.

## Conclusion

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Nous pouvons tirer au moins deux conclusions quant au rapport de la philosophie et de la science chez Deleuze, conclusions qui sont conformes aux thèses défendues tant dans ses études que dans *Différence et répétition*. Premièrement, la différence ou la dissymétrie productrice marque la limite négative de la science, le barrage au-delà duquel elle ne peut remonter le cours que la Nature descend. Les paradoxes auxquels la logique, la mathématique et la physique aboutissent lorsqu'elles sont confrontées à leurs limites respectives témoignent du fait que la science ne peut théoriser positivement sa limite<sup>13</sup>. On doit dire l'inverse de la philosophie, qui suit le mouvement de complication de l'absolu et installe son camp sur ce domaine. C'est pourquoi, deuxièmement, la différence pure, la question ontologique, le jeu ou le pur hasard dans lequel s'originent les Idées, cette dimension que la pensée philosophique ne peut épuiser, constitue certes l'impuissance de penser qui l'affecte de l'intérieur, mais aussi l'impensé dans lequel elle s'engendre – l'objet de sa pensée. Quoique l'impossible autofondation de la pensée touche autant la philosophie que la science, la science n'a pas pour tâche d'exprimer, dans les signes qui lui sont propres, cette différence interne que constitue le temps à l'état pur. En tout ceci, Deleuze ne prétend pas que la science ne pense pas ; il insiste sur le fait que la philosophie pense autrement. La conception de la science progresse donc chez lui sur une ligne de crête : car d'un côté les théories scientifiques, en tant qu'elles accompagnent le mouvement d'actualisation de l'être, se présentent comme des solutions actuelles aux problèmes virtuels, et sont donc homogènes

13 Sur ce point, cf. la comparaison que fait Deleuze du statut du non-sens dans les ouvrages littéraires et dans les ouvrages logico-mathématiques de Carroll-Dodgson (cf. Deleuze 1969 : passim). Sur la question de la limite en science, cf. Deleuze et Guattari 1991 : 112 sq.

à la représentation (de ce point de vue, la science relève de l'imagination) ; mais de l'autre, l'activité scientifique est adéquate à la pensée dialectique des Idées-problèmes, dès lors qu'elle procède à une détermination autonome des conditions de résolubilité des problèmes (de ce point de vue, la science relève de la pensée pure). De sorte qu'il faut dire à la fois que la science participe, comme la philosophie, au « caractère aventureux des Idées », c'est-à-dire au mouvement de l'apprendre ; mais que, contrairement à la philosophie, la science l'exprime dans des théories qui ne sont pas de même nature que les Idées, dans la mesure où elles n'expriment pas le temps à l'état pur.

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Igor Krtolica

Science and Philosophy in Deleuze

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Abstract

Deleuze will not wait until he had completed his works to frame and formulate a theory on the relation between philosophy and science. The first articulations of this question are already present as early as the 1950s and 1960s in the studies on Bergson and Nietzsche, and then in *Difference and repetition* as well as in *The Logic of Sense*. It is also true that this question will be specifically developed in 1991 in *What Is Philosophy?* But throughout his work, the main thrust would proceed. This issue, it seems, comprises three main aspects: in the first place, in a polemic against the neo-Kantian epistemological legacy, it primarily consists in denying the critical definition of philosophy as being a 'reflection on scientific knowledge' to replace it by a conception drawn from Bergson's expressionist ontology that places science and philosophy on both sides of the being; secondly, in an attempt to restore the concept of dialectics, it consists in making the dialectics of ideas the communal sphere of both science and philosophy; thirdly, aiming to specify every form of thinking, it consists in shaping how each expresses its ideas or its problems with its own signs. These three aspects, it seems, can frame the overall conception Deleuze formed of the link between science and philosophy. We shall successively analyze them, exclusively considering the first period of Deleuze's work, which is to say the pre-guattarian publications.

**Keywords:** Deleuze; philosophy; science; dialectics; idea; question

Igor Krtolica

Nauka i filozofija kod Deleza

Rezime

Delez ne čeka okončanje svog dela kako bi formulisao teoriju odnosa filozofije i nauke. Prve formulacije tog problema nastaju pedesetih i šezdesetih godina dvadesetog veka u studijama o Bergsonu i Ničeju, potom u *Razlici i ponavljanju* i *Logici smisla*. Istina, to pitanje se detaljno razmatra i 1991, u *Šta je filozofija?* Međutim, od početka do kraja dela, ideja vodilja nije menjana.

Čini se da ta ideja sadrži tri glavna aspekta: prvi se sastoji u polemici protiv neokantovskog epistemološkog nasleđa kada se najpre odbija kritička definicija filozofije kao „refleksije o naučnom saznanju“ i kada se ona zamenjuje koncepcijom inspirisanom Bergsonovom ekspresionističkom ontologijom koja raspodeljuje nauku i filozofiju na dve polovine bića; drugi se sastoji u naporu sa kojim se obnavlja koncept dijalektike, kada dijalektika Ideja sačinjava zajedničku sferu nauke i filozofije; konačno, treći se aspekt, s ciljem specifikovanja svakog oblika mišljenja, sastoji u određivanju načina sa kojim svaki oblik mišljenja izražava svoje Ideje ili svoje probleme sopstvenim znacima. Ova tri aspekta, čini se da definišu najopštiji okvir delezijanske koncepcije odnosa nauke i filozofije. Ovde ih proučavamo sukcesivno, imajući na umu isključivo prvi period Delezovog dela, odnosno, pred-gatarijevske spise.

**Ključne reči:** Delez, filozofija, nauka, dijalektika, Ideja, problem

## **Anselm Jappe: La fin du capitalisme ne sera pas une fin pacifique**

Entretien préparé et réalisé par Mark Losoncz

*ML: Je voudrais commencer par la notion centrale: la valeur. D'un côté, il s'agit d'un mot qui a été éliminé de l'économie mainstream dans les années 1930, quand il est devenu une expression purement opérationnelle, entièrement réduit au prix. D'autre part, ce mot est très polysémique: il a des significations mathématiques, philosophiques (dans l'axiologie, par exemple), sociologiques (comme dans le Werturteilss-treit) etc. Alors, pourquoi la Wertkritik utilise-t-elle le mot « valeur » aujourd'hui?*

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**AJ:** Marx, dans un petit écrit qui s'appelle *Notes critiques sur le Traité d'économie politique d'Adolph Wagner* (1880), commente lui-même les différents sens possibles du mot « valeur ». Il trouve les mots « valeur » et « valeur-travail » surtout chez les économistes politiques anglais qui se sont détachés de la doctrine des physiocrates pour laquelle la valeur est liée à l'utilité du produit (notamment en agriculture). Adam Smith et David Ricardo, en revanche, conçoivent la valeur comme quelque chose qui est exclusivement donné par le travail humain, par la quantité de travail humain. Donc, même lorsque l'être humain puise de l'eau dans une rivière, c'est l'activité humaine qui attribue une valeur à l'eau, qu'on retrouve ensuite aussi dans les autres produits. Jusqu'à ce que l'eau reste dans la rivière, elle n'a pas de valeur au sens économique.

*ML: Donc il n'y a pas de valor naturalis, de valeur naturelle.*

**AJ:** Non. Cependant, Smith et Ricardo affirment que ce n'est pas seulement l'activité de ceux qui travaillent directement, mais que ce sont aussi le capital et la terre – et donc les propriétaires des moyens de production – qui contribuent à composer la valeur totale du produit. Selon la vision marxiste traditionnelle, Marx se serait limité à reprendre la théorie de la valeur-travail chez Smith et Ricardo, simplement en éliminant les facteurs dérivés que sont le capital et la terre, c'est-à-dire la propriété

des moyens de production, et en gardant le seul travail vivant comme source de la valeur. En vérité, Marx fait en même temps une autre opération plus compliquée : il critique l'existence même de la valeur, le fait même qu'au travail soit attribuée la capacité de créer une valeur qui accompagne les marchandises comme une espèce d'ombre. C'est le côté le plus radical de la critique de Marx, mais aussi le côté le moins connu. Selon la vision marxiste traditionnelle, Marx aurait simplement accepté l'existence de la valeur comme quelque chose de naturel, comme quelque chose qui existe dans toutes les sociétés et qui correspondrait au fait que les hommes se sont toujours intéressés à l'« économie » du temps, en évaluant les objets selon le temps qui est nécessaire pour les produire. Marx a effectivement raisonné parfois en des termes semblables. Ceux-ci conduisent alors à concevoir une théorie de la justice et de la juste (re)distribution de la valeur, donc à la revendication d'un plein salaire pour l'ouvrier. Celui-ci doit rentrer dans la pleine possession de la valeur qu'il a produite, au lieu de devoir la partager avec le propriétaire des moyens de production : le capitaliste est alors vu comme un simple parasite. Je répète, c'est l'approche marxiste traditionnelle – qui d'ailleurs peut s'appuyer effectivement sur certaines affirmations de Marx. Mais il y a en même temps chez Marx une autre approche. La critique de la valeur appelle ces deux approches le « Marx ésotérique » et le « Marx exotérique » (qui se trouvent mêlées tout au long de l'évolution de sa pensée – il ne s'agit pas d'une question de « phases »). Dans l'approche ésotérique, l'accent est mis sur « la double nature du travail », comme Marx l'appelle : chaque travail, en créant des marchandises, crée des valeurs d'usage, mais crée aussi une « valeur » marchande qui est une pure fiction sociale. Elle ne fait pas partie des propriétés objectives d'une marchandise. Ce que la valeur représente est simplement le travail qui a été effectué pour produire la marchandise – pas le travail concret, mais la dépense d'énergie humaine non différenciée, mesurée avec les paramètres du temps (donc, la question est simplement de savoir si on travaille 10 minutes ou 60 minutes, ce qui fait six fois plus de valeur – sans égard au contenu). Cette valeur n'a rien à voir avec l'utilité du produit ou avec sa beauté. C'est un critère quantitatif qui reste indifférent aux besoins des producteurs ou des consommateurs. Marx propose cette analyse de la valeur notamment dans les premiers chapitres du *Capital*. Il ne s'agit pas d'une simple abstraction conceptuelle : selon l'analyse de Marx, cette abstraction de toutes les qualités – ce qu'il appelle le travail abstrait – devient une réalité effective dans la société marchande et finit par gouverner même la réalité concrète des objets, c'est-à-dire leur valeur d'usage. Effectivement

on produit des marchandises dans le capitalisme seulement pour accumuler de la valeur. Le côté concret est subordonné à l'accumulation de temps de travail. Ce n'est que le temps de travail qui après une série de métamorphoses se représente finalement dans l'argent – et comme on sait, dans le capitalisme la seule chose qui importe, c'est l'argent. Transformer une somme initiale de 100 euros en 110 euros, puis en 120 euros etc., est le seul but réel de l'économie marchande; la satisfaction des besoins n'est qu'un aspect secondaire. Mais cette multiplication de l'argent n'est pas une multiplication des objets concrets – elle est due à la multiplication du travail et surtout du surtravail qui donne la survaleur sous forme de profit. La critique de la valeur s'est constituée à partir des années 1980 en Allemagne justement sur la base d'une nouvelle lecture de Marx qui en reprend le côté « ésotérique ». Celui-ci a toujours été négligé ou oublié très vite, parce que les marxistes traditionnels commencent leur discours par la partage de la valeur entre le capitaliste et le prolétaire, tandis que la critique de la valeur affirme qu'un problème plus profond existe déjà du fait que l'activité sociale prend la forme de la valeur, en se fondant donc sur une espèce d'indifférenciation de toute production, sa réduction à la quantité d'énergie dépensée. Bien sûr, le terme « critique de la valeur », comme tous les termes, est né un peu par hasard, et c'est justement à cause de sa polysémie que j'utilise aussi le terme « critique du fétichisme de la marchandise » qui est plus long, mais aussi plus clair.

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*ML: Les théoriciens de la Wertkritik, comme vous l'avez déjà mentionné, ont souvent élaboré une histoire alternative du marxisme. Quelqu'un a dit que le comportement de Robert Kurz et de la Wertkritik est très similaire à celui de Guy Debord: il y avait d'intenses polémiques, des hérésies et des schismes. Qui sont les prédécesseurs les plus importants de Wertkritik selon vous et qui sont les alliés théorétiques de la Wertkritik, les courants les plus proches de la Wertkritik aujourd'hui?*

**AJ:** Il n'y a pas de filiation directe entre la critique de la valeur et les situationnistes. Guy Debord était très peu connu en Allemagne à l'époque où la *Wertkritik* s'est formée et c'est plutôt moi qui ai établi ensuite le lien. Ce sont deux moments historiquement bien différents.

Jusqu'aux années 1950 et 1960, le marxisme était très largement identifié avec le léninisme – que ce soit sa version stalinienne triomphante ou sa version dissidente trotskiste. Et plus tard même avec cette autre forme de stalinisme qu'était le maoïsme. C'est surtout à partir des années 1960,



dans le climat qui a produit 1968, que de nombreuses hérésies ou hétérodoxies, notamment des années 1920, ont été redécouvertes à l'intérieur du champ marxiste. Comme quelqu'un a dit: tous les auteurs contre lesquels Lénine polémique dans son écrit *La maladie infantile du communisme* (« le gauchisme ») étaient redécouverts et faisaient l'objet de nouvelles publications et interprétations. Donc Debord lui-même fait partie de ce climat qui a permis de redécouvrir une tradition de l'autre marxisme, que ce soit Karl Korsch ou Georg Lukács, que ce soit le communisme de conseils de Pannekoek ou d'autres courants qui étaient plus proches de l'anarchisme comme Kropotkine, ou des dissidents en URSS comme Ante Ciliga ou Victor Serge...

980 *ML: Vous avez écrit un livre sur Guy Debord qui vous a envoyé une lettre, un éloge de votre monographie.*

**AJ:** Il m'est arrivé de parler avec des personnes qui me disaient qu'elles venaient de lire *La société du spectacle* – mais sans avoir compris qu'il s'agit d'un livre paru il y a quarante ans. Donc il y a des gens qui croient que le livre est paru tout récemment. Effectivement, c'est une des rares oeuvres des années 1960 qu'on peut encore lire aujourd'hui: pour le style, mais aussi pour l'analyse d'une époque où naît la société d'information et de consommation – une nouvelle forme de marchandisation du monde et de la vie. La société du spectacle a été souvent qualifiée de « prophétique ». Ce n'est pas seulement une critique de la télévision, mais plus généralement une critique de la passivité organisée où les personnes contemplent d'autres personnes qui vivent à leur place, en guise de compensation de la pauvreté de leur vie. Debord était un des premiers à reprendre les concepts marxistes de marchandise et de fétichisme de la marchandise. Son actualité consiste justement dans sa contribution à la création d'une critique sociale nouvelle qui analyse le caractère anonyme et fétichiste de la domination capitaliste – même si la théorie de Debord était encore assez mêlée à d'autres formes de marxisme plus traditionnelles. L'autre aspect essentiel de l'agitation situationniste réside dans le fait d'avoir combattu le spectacle avec des moyens non spectaculaires, donc d'avoir démontré qu'on peut combattre le capitalisme sans s'exposer dans les médias, sans enseigner à l'université et sans militer dans des partis. C'est aussi une leçon sur la dignité du refus. Certains milieux artistiques misent aujourd'hui sur la renaissance des pratiques de la dérive, de l'exploration de la ville et du « détournement d'objets esthétiques préfabriqués » pratiqués en leur temps par les situationnistes.

*ML: Revenons à la question de la redécouverte des nombreuses hérésies ou hétérodoxies et à la Wertkritik.*

**AJ:** Avec la *Wertkritik* c'est différent. Elle analyse les différentes formes historiques de marxisme justement pour voir où on peut trouver une compréhension de la nature du fétichisme et de la marchandise et quels courants se sont vraiment approchés de la question de la production de la valeur, et pas seulement de sa distribution. Et si on pose cela comme paramètre, on trouve que pratiquement aucun courant, même parmi les courants hétérodoxes, n'a vraiment critiqué le travail, la valeur et le fétichisme de la marchandise. Les hétérodoxes ont très souvent insisté surtout sur les questions de stratégie, mais ils ont rarement critiqué les catégories de base comme l'argent, le travail et la marchandise. C'est vrai également pour les anarchistes. Donc le jugement sur la non-compréhension des marxistes par rapport à la critique catégorielle de Marx s'applique à presque tous les dissidents du marxisme. La question des précurseurs de la critique de la valeur se réduit finalement à peu de choses. C'est sûr qu'*Histoire et conscience de classe* de Lukács occupe une place importante, mais le travail abstrait analysé par Lukács est surtout le travail morcelé et atomisé, plutôt que le côté abstrait de la double nature de travail, comme chez Marx. Il y a une certaine influence de l'École de Francfort sur la critique de la valeur – mais il faut dire que même chez Adorno et chez Marcuse, on reste essentiellement dans une critique de la circulation plutôt que de la production des marchandises. Et justement là où ils étaient marxistes, ils sont restés dans un marxisme assez traditionnel. Donc cela veut dire que la critique de la valeur est née comme une rupture avec les formes antérieures de marxisme, plutôt que comme leur continuation. Même les hétérodoxes du marxisme ont toujours voulu s'appuyer sur quelque tradition: sur Lukács, Gramsci, Althusser... La critique de la valeur reprend plutôt une partie de l'œuvre de Marx même. Cela ne veut pas dire que la critique de la valeur est plus intelligente que ses prédécesseurs, mais qu'il y a des circonstances historiques nouvelles. Dans les années 1970 et 1980, le développement capitaliste avait mis un terme aux possibilités d'une amélioration à l'intérieur du système même, et donc également aux formes de critique immanente du capitalisme, où l'on pensait encore à une réforme du capitalisme. C'est seulement à cette époque qu'on a pu commencer à avoir une vision de l'ensemble de la société capitaliste, et pas seulement d'une phase particulière. Et la critique de la valeur a eu simplement le mérite d'avoir élaboré la première expression théorique de ces changements...

*ML: N'y a-t-il pas aussi une influence d'Isaak Illich Roubine et d'Alfred Sohn-Rethel?*

**AJ:** Ce sont des auteurs qui sont parfois cités dans les écrits de Kurz. Et on peut y ajouter les théories sur la crise de Rosa Luxembourg et de Henryk Grossman ; néanmoins la critique de la valeur ne s'est pas posée essentiellement comme une continuation d'autres initiatives théoriques. C'est sûr que Roubine a été un des très rares auteurs de son époque qui ont effectivement compris la structure de la valeur. Mais Kurz dans ses derniers écrits critiquait l'approche de Roubine lorsque celui-ci voyait dans la réduction de tous les travaux aux travaux abstraits une espèce d'unité de mesure qu'on peut trouver dans toutes les sociétés humaines – et pas une spécificité du régime capitaliste. La critique de la valeur n'a jamais une attitude de vénération envers des modèles théoriques du passé. Même les auteurs qui sont appréciés, peuvent faire l'objet de critiques sévères à certains égards.

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*ML: Et que pensez-vous des alliés possibles plus contemporains comme Moishe Postone ou Jean-Marie Vincent?*

**AJ:** Moishe Postone a développé aux États-Unis une autre forme de critique de la valeur, à la même époque que la *Wertkritik* en Allemagne. Il a publié *Temps, travail et domination sociale* en 1993. Il y a beaucoup de points communs entre les travaux de Postone et les travaux de Krisis. Postone puise en partie aux mêmes sources (il a étudié à Francfort avec les élèves d'Adorno). Mais il y a aussi des différences notables : chez Postone nous ne trouvons pas une théorie de la crise ni une véritable critique du travail comme catégorie supra-historique. Postone critique le travail dans le capitalisme en tant que médiation sociale autonomisée, mais chez lui manque l'idée que « le travail » qui comprend les activités les plus différentes constitue déjà une abstraction que les sociétés précapitalistes ne connaissent pas. Malheureusement on n'a pas eu beaucoup de dialogues entre Postone et la critique de la valeur en Allemagne. Ce sont donc plutôt des voies parallèles.

Jean-Marie Vincent est un auteur qui a d'autres origines. Il était trotskiste et universitaire ; il a été l'un des premiers à introduire l'École de Francfort en France. Il a publié en 1987 *Critique du travail. Le faire et l'agir*, un livre plutôt courageux pour les marxistes de l'époque. Ses arguments sont parfois assez proches de la critique de la valeur. Mais sur d'autres aspects il est très éloigné de celle-ci, par exemple lorsqu'il reprend les catégories de Martin Heidegger ou lorsqu'il utilise les analyses des postopéraïstes.

*ML: Vous avez écrit votre doctorat sur le fétichisme chez Adorno et Lukács. Comme je voudrais traduire aussi cet entretien en hongrois, pourriez-vous parler un peu plus de Lukács ? Il me semble qu'on peut faire aussi une distinction entre le Lukács exotérique et le Lukács ésotérique...*

**AJ:** J'ai fait cette thèse de doctorat avec Nicolas Tertulian quand il était professeur à l'EHESS à Paris. Il était un spécialiste de Lukács qu'il avait connu personnellement. Tertulian mettait tout l'accent sur l'ontologie et sur les dernières oeuvres de Lukács. Évidemment, dans ma thèse je me suis plutôt appuyé sur Histoire et conscience de classe et j'ai tenté de démontrer que les jugements opposés d'Adorno et de Lukács au sujet de la modernité artistique du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle – que Lukács refuse presque complètement, tandis qu'Adorno défend les avant-gardes artistiques – ont leur source dans leurs conceptions divergentes de l'aliénation et du fétichisme. La conception de Lukács est très liée à une espèce d'aliénation de l'essence humaine et reprend des thèmes des *Manuscrits de 1844* de Marx. Lukács, dans ses dernières oeuvres, est plus éloigné que dans ses premières oeuvres d'une prise en compte du fétichisme et du rôle de travail abstrait. Au contraire, il fait un éloge du travail de la manière la plus traditionnelle possible. Le travail y apparaît comme l'activité humaine principale. Tandis qu'Adorno, malgré certaines limites, se rapproche davantage de la conception du fétichisme de la marchandise. Voilà aussi pourquoi Lukács, avec sa centralité du travail, en arrive à ce qu'il appelle une conception anthropomorphisante de l'art et voilà pourquoi il critique l'art non-figuratif, tandis qu'Adorno est plus sensible aux aspects abstraits de la vie sociale. Il affirme dans sa *Théorie esthétique* que l'art abstrait dit plus de vérité sur la société capitaliste qu'une représentation « réaliste » de héros révolutionnaires.

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*ML: La conceptualisation de l'Europe de l'Est était très importante pour Robert Kurz, déjà dans les années 1980, à l'époque de la naissance de la Wertkritik. Il a analysé les raisons structurelles de l'inefficacité de l'économie du bloc de l'Est et il a suggéré que la chute de l'URSS n'était que le premier état de la nouvelle crise de capitalisme. Que pensez-vous de la position structurelle de l'Europe de l'Est aujourd'hui?*

**AJ:** Vous parlez évidemment du livre *L'effondrement de la modernisation* de Kurz qui est paru en 1991, lorsque l'Union soviétique existait encore, mais était sur le point d'exhaler le dernier soupir. Ce qui était révolutionnaire dans le livre de Kurz était le fait qu'il n'analysait pas l'Union soviétique comme une société dominée par une bureaucratie mais gardant

quand même une structure socialiste – comme disait, par exemple, la critique de type trotskiste. Kurz n’y voyait pas simplement une autre forme de capitalisme, comme le faisaient d’autres critiques, telles que la revue *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, mais il montrait que l’Union soviétique avait gardé les fondements de la société capitaliste, donc le travail abstrait, la valeur et l’argent, et que la forme super-étatique ne contredisait pas son appartenance à la société capitaliste mondiale. L’État et sa forte intervention ne sont pas du tout incompatibles avec la logique capitaliste, et ils ont souvent également caractérisé les États capitalistes à l’Ouest. Kurz a montré surtout que l’Union soviétique s’est écroulée parce qu’elle ne pouvait pas résister à d’autres formes plus compétitives de la même société marchande mondiale. Le paradoxe de la société soviétique était de vouloir une société marchande sans marché. Kurz a analysé la réalité soviétique comme le résultat d’une « modernisation de rattrapage », qui devait combler le retard initial. La Russie était restée en arrière après la première vague de l’industrialisation partie des pays occidentaux. Donc, ce pays avait besoin d’une espace protégé et autarcique pour pouvoir installer d’une manière forcée et accélérée ses industries – pas seulement en termes matériels, mais aussi en ce qui concerne la transformation des mentalités et des formes de vie. L’économie soviétique était toujours beaucoup moins productive que celle des pays occidentaux, mais elle était protégée et ses produits ne souffraient pas de la concurrence des produits occidentaux.

En même temps, Kurz avait déjà prévu qu’après l’écroulement de l’Union soviétique et des autres pays de l’Est n’arriverait pas la prospérité capitaliste promise. Le capitalisme n’est pas le modèle « juste », « approprié », qu’il suffit de mettre à la place du modèle erroné, comme veulent croire les libéraux qui pensent que le système socialiste ne marche pas parce qu’il ne motive pas assez les gens et parce qu’il serait contraire à la nature égoïste de l’être humain. Il suffirait donc, selon les libéraux, de remplacer le mauvais modèle par le modèle juste où chacun donne le meilleur de soi, et la main invisible du marché ferait arriver finalement la richesse pour tous. Les libéraux avaient promis que la Russie deviendrait riche comme des pays tels que l’Allemagne. Mais le capitalisme global est un système concurrentiel où les premiers pays qui sont entrés dans la course – l’Angleterre d’abord, ensuite la France, l’Allemagne etc. – ont toujours maintenu leur compétitivité majeure en écrasant les autres économies qui ne réussissaient pas à se développer à la même vitesse. Cela veut dire que plus un pays entre tard dans l’économie mondiale, plus il se retrouve dans un contexte où les créneaux et les niches sont déjà occupés. Il n’était

donc plus possible d'avoir une industrie locale une fois qu'on avait aboli l'isolement de l'Union soviétique. La Russie se trouva donc rapidement dans le rôle classique d'un pays du tiers-monde. C'est-à-dire qu'elle fournit essentiellement des matières premières, surtout du gaz naturel et du pétrole à bas prix, en échange des produits finis – et chers – des pays occidentaux. Elle a misé également sur quelques produits particuliers, comme l'armement. Cette production n'a évidemment pas une structure équilibrée, et ce n'est pas un capitalisme stable qui est né en Russie, mais plutôt une espèce de kleptocratie, un régime de clique maffieuse qui vit essentiellement de l'exploitation des matières premières du pays. Pendant la présidence de Boris Eltsine, la Russie semblait se désintégrer complètement. Ensuite elle est revenue à un régime autoritaire, le régime de Poutine. Donc, il n'est pas du tout vrai que l'introduction du capitalisme débouchera finalement sur la démocratie. Au contraire, le capitalisme, pour survivre, a tendance à reprendre des formes autoritaires. Les autres pays de l'Europe de l'Est vivent maintenant en tant que pays semi-colonisés, surtout par (et pour) l'économie allemande.

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*ML: La théorie de la crise de capitalisme joue un rôle central dans la Wertkritik. Il s'agit du caractère autodestructeur du système, des limites et des contradictions internes... Vous parlez aussi de la barbarisation, de la crise de la civilisation entière. Cependant, la Wertkritik est souvent attaquée comme une espèce de « catastrophisme » et comme une « prophétie de l'auto-annihilation gnostique du monde » etc. Il y a par exemple une discussion entre les théoriciens de Neue Marx-Lektüre et la Wertkritik .*

*AJ: Neue Marx-Lektüre...* Je pense que vous vous référez à des auteurs comme Hans-Georg Backhaus, Helmut Reichelt et Michael Heinrich... Elle reste en général dans une perspective assez universitaire d'exégèse et de philologie marxiennes. Elle a donné parfois des résultats importants, mais aussi des impasses théoriques. Elle s'est intéressée assez peu à ce que Marx peut nous apprendre sur le monde d'aujourd'hui. La Wertkritik, au contraire, se réfère surtout au capitalisme contemporain, qui est différent du capitalisme qu'avait connu Marx.

La tendance autodestructrice du capital était encore peu visible à l'époque de Marx. Aujourd'hui, elle occupe largement la scène, surtout parce que – comme Marx l'avait déjà montré – il n'y a que le travail vivant qui crée la valeur, tandis que le capitalisme tend à remplacer le travail vivant avec des machines, en diminuant ainsi la création de valeur. Marx a vu que

cette contradiction constitue un facteur potentiel de crise pour le capitalisme à long terme, mais il pensait que la révolution prolétarienne arriverait bien avant que le capitalisme atteigne la limite de sa faculté de créer assez de valeur. Cette désubstantialisation de la valeur est finalement advenue, et elle a connu un saut qualitatif à partir des années 1960 avec l'informatisation du travail. C'est à partir de ce moment-là que le capitalisme se trouve dans une crise permanente, et pas simplement dans une crise conjoncturelle. La critique de la valeur n'est pas apocalyptique par parti pris, mais parce qu'elle prend en compte l'épuisement de la logique de base même du capitalisme. Les dernières décennies ont largement confirmé sa théorie de la crise. Cela fait quarante ans qu'on attend le nouveau cycle de croissance promis par les économistes bourgeois. Nous avons vu simplement la croissance des marchés financiers. Il ne s'agit pas de prévoir une grande crise finale future, mais de parler de la crise à laquelle nous assistons déjà. En vérité, la société du travail est déjà dans une crise grave. C'est aussi la crise de l'argent et cela veut dire qu'il y a une diminution de la valeur et une perte de substance de l'argent. Mais beaucoup de courants théoriques, même à gauche, persistent à dire que le capitalisme va toujours très bien.

*ML: La Wertkritik est née dans un pays développé. Mais est-ce qu'on peut appliquer la thèse selon laquelle la proportion de travail vivant diminue dans les pays de la périphérie et de la semi-périphérie ou même au niveau global? Il y a de nouvelles tendances d'expansion du capital et d'industrialisation...*

**AJ:** C'est un argument souvent répété : il n'y aurait pas de diminution du travail global, parce qu'à chaque poste de travail qu'on perd en Europe correspondrait un poste de travail nouveau, ou plus d'un, en Chine, en Inde ou en Indonésie. C'est un argument fallacieux parce que ce qui compte pour l'accumulation du capital n'est pas simplement le nombre des travailleurs exploités. La valeur que ces travailleurs produisent dépend largement de la technologie utilisée. Pour le dire de manière très brève: des travailleurs indiens qui travaillent toute la journée pour deux dollars avec des machines à coudre pour faire des chemises peuvent créer un grand profit pour leurs employeurs particuliers – mais ensemble ils créent moins de valeur ajoutée qu'un travailleur high-tech dans une usine en Europe. Ces grandes masses de travailleurs ultra-exploités contribuent assez peu à la masse globale de valeur. Il y a des mécanismes de redistribution de la valeur sur le marché mondial qui font que les capitaux les

plus technologiques – donc ceux qui contribuent le plus à la diminution globale de valeur – sont paradoxalement ceux qui obtiennent la partie la plus large de ce qui reste de la tarte, même si la tarte diminue. Donc l'idée que la Chine va sauver le capitalisme ne résiste pas à un véritable examen des faits. La Chine dépend des exportations vers les vieux pays capitalistes. Et si par exemple les États-Unis ne peuvent plus acheter, l'économie chinoise elle-même sera en très grande difficulté. Il existe un circuit de déficit autour du Pacifique qui est aussi un circuit de simulation.

*ML: Il y a une autre critique assez répandue contre la critique de la valeur. La critique de la valeur a toujours refusé l'Arbeitsbewegungsmarxismus et les recherches différentes de sujets révolutionnaires. Peut-on néanmoins parler encore aujourd'hui de lutte de classes dans un certain sens? Même si nous refusons de comprendre les résidus d'une classe ouvrière comme quasi-caste semi-moderne avec une identité socio-culturelle, est-ce qu'on peut encore parler aujourd'hui de classes et de luttes de classes?*

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**AJ:** Il existe évidemment des luttes des classes, parce que le capitalisme est une société basée sur la concurrence – il y a toujours une lutte autour de la distribution de la valeur. Mais aujourd'hui cette lutte n'a plus – et n'a eu que rarement dans le passé – le caractère d'une lutte pour ou contre le capitalisme. Ses participants ont presque toujours présupposé et accepté l'existence de la valeur, de l'argent et de la marchandise. Donc, ce sont largement des luttes à l'intérieur de la sphère de la circulation. Bien sûr, ces luttes des classes ont eu une grande importance historique et ont permis à de nombreuses personnes de vivre un peu mieux. Mais leur horizon, sauf à de rares moments, n'était pas l'émancipation par rapport à la forme sociale fétichiste. On y avait déjà accepté l'existence et la nécessité prétendue du travail. Les actions revendicatives des travailleurs ont voulu simplement libérer le travail par rapport aux « parasites » qu'on localisait dans la sphère de la circulation (chez les propriétaires d'usine ou chez les banquiers). Avec le déclin du prolétariat classique, la gauche a indiqué beaucoup d'autres « sujets révolutionnaires » possibles – que ce soient les travailleurs informatiques, les travailleurs précaires, les femmes, ou encore les peuples du tiers-monde etc. Mais on a vu qu'aucune catégorie qui participe au cycle du travail et du capital n'est en tant que telle en dehors du capital. Leurs membres ne sont pas intéressés, pour la seule raison de leur appartenance à une classe sociale, par l'abolition de ces formes sociales ou de la valeur. En même temps, cela ne veut



pas dire qu'il n'y a pas de conflits sociaux. Au contraire, le capitalisme crée tous les jours des situations invivables sur le plan économique et écologique, sur le plan de l'urbanisme, de la vie quotidienne... Le capitalisme se voit tout le temps contesté en termes implicites ou explicites. Mais ces conflits restent très souvent dans le cadre de la logique abstraite de la valorisation. Celle-ci veut soumettre toutes les exigences humaines à la seule logique du profit et se trouve en conflit avec la bonne vie et même avec la survie de l'humanité. Ces genres de conflits ne sont plus lisibles à travers le prisme des classes sociales déjà constituées. Ce qui reste de l'ancienne couche ouvrière dans les usines est souvent devenu un groupe social assez conservateur qui veut seulement défendre ses intérêts matériels immédiats.

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*ML: Et maintenant quelques mots sur les alternatives possibles... Même s'il n'y a pas beaucoup de détails sur la société à venir dans Le Capital, on peut reconstruire malgré tout chez Marx au moins le cadre de la société de demain. Le livre de Peter Hudis, par exemple (Marx's concept of the Alternative to Capitalism), a reconstruit en détail l'imagination marxienne. En plus, il me semble qu'il y a une espèce de renaissance de l'imagination des modèles alternatifs (Lebowitz, McNally etc.).*

**AJ:** La critique de la valeur a souvent critiqué les alternatives faciles – et elle l'a fait pour différentes raisons. Pour résumer brièvement, d'un côté, bien sûr on peut expérimenter, jusqu'à un certain degré, des formes de vie alternatives à l'intérieur du cadre capitaliste. Mais la logique capitaliste possède une tendance à tout écraser et à tout transformer en source de profit et ne va pas tolérer la naissance d'une autre forme de vie. Il faut donc prévoir une phase de conflits et de luttes. Dans le capitalisme, tout ce qui existe n'est considéré que comme une portion de valeur qui ne connaît que des relations quantitatives. La première exigence pour une alternative serait de redonner leur dignité à tous les objets qu'on crée en ne permettant plus leur transformation en marchandises. Cela veut dire aussi qu'il n'y aurait pas une forme d'échange de marchandises basée sur la quantité de travail. En même temps, il est nécessaire que toutes ces formes nouvelles soient pratiquées sur la plus large échelle possible. Autrement, une usine autogérée ou une simple ferme risqueraient de devoir s'affirmer dans un marché anonyme et concurrentiel qui les soumettrait aux mêmes exigences de rentabilité et de profit que les autres entreprises. Il faudrait tout de suite organiser des échanges non marchands entre

différentes activités. La fin du capitalisme ne sera pas une fin pacifique; en effet, la tendance à la barbarisation augmente partout. Les forces postmarchandes et non barbares devront trouver des façons de réagir contre la logique maffieuse et criminelle qui ne manquera pas de se diffuser. Il y aura aussi une augmentation de la violence comme on le voit déjà avec les nombreuses guerres civiles dans le monde.

*ML: Peut-être faudrait-il ajouter ici la nostalgie du welfare state.*

**AJ:** Oui. Elle est très répandue en Europe occidentale, donc dans les pays qui ont connu le plus le welfare state. Mais celui-ci était lié à un bref moment du capitalisme, quand le développement économique avait permis de redistribuer de la valeur à l'intérieur de la société capitaliste. Historiquement, c'était une exception qu'on appelle les Trente glorieuses, le miracle économique... Mais c'est ce qui est souvent resté dans les têtes comme le « véritable » capitalisme qui serait « humain » par rapport à toutes les formes venues après. Ces autres formes sont interprétées comme des dégénérescences qu'on pourrait attribuer à des facteurs extérieurs, aux banques par exemple, ou aux politiciens corrompus..., avec l'idée qu'on peut revenir vers cette espèce de capitalisme idéalisé qui serait sain. Évidemment, la critique de la valeur n'est pas du tout de cet avis. La crise qui est venue après le boom fordiste n'était pas le dérèglement d'un système « sain », mais faisait partie de la nature même du capitalisme. On ne pourrait pas revenir aux anciennes recettes keynésiennes-fordistes parce qu'on ne peut pas abolir la technologie qui remplace le travail vivant. Et il ne faut pas oublier que c'était contre la société triste de cette époque-là que se dressaient les mouvements de 1968 ! C'est inconcevable d'en avoir la nostalgie.

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